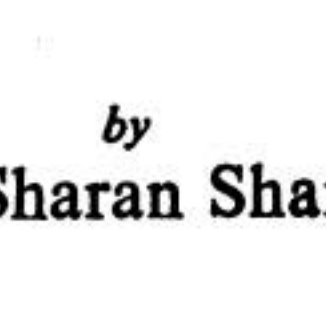
Perspectives in Social and Economic History of Early India

by
Ram Sharan Sharma



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Preface

THE present book is a revised and substantially enlarged version of the author's *Light on Early Indian Society and Economy* published in 1966. Some of the old chapters have been omitted, but the chapter dealing with stages in economic history has been rewritten to accommodate new material; now it appears in two chapters. A survey of social differentiation has been added to explain production relations. Several other new chapters dealing with social and economic processes have been inserted. The relevance of divination and communication to social control and cohesion has been discussed. The importance of coins for the study of economic history has been indicated, and the practice of usury has been related to the feudal economy. Although the book contains studies spread over the last twenty-five years, they are bound together by several connected concerns. The problems of changes in family, social class, production techniques and economic organisation as well as social ideology receive attention. The usual approach emphasising the eternity of social and economic institutions in ancient India is discarded, and developments in society and economy are seen in terms of continuity, discontinuity and varying trends. A good portion of the book follows the chronological order, but many themes have been treated topically. Each theme, however, has been related to some broad perspective in early society and economy.

In preparing the press copy Dr. Mohan Chand and Dr. V.K. Jain have given valuable help, which I gratefully acknowledge. I thank Professor R.C. Pandeya, Dr. B.D. Singal and Professor P.D. Tripathi for various kinds of help. I also thank Shri Devendra Jain of Munshiram Manoharlal for expediting the publication of this book.

R.S. Sharma

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University of Delhi
15 January 1983

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Roman Equivalents of Nāgarī Letters

अ	a	ए	c	क्	k	च	c
आ	ā	ऐ	ai	ख्	kh	छ्	ch
इ	i	ओ	o	ग्	g	ज्	j
ई	ī	औ	au	घ्	gh	झ्	jh
उ	u	ऋ	ṛ	ङ्	ṅ	ञ्	ñ
ऊ	ū						
ट्	ṭ	त्	t	प्	p	य्	y
ठ्	ṭh	थ्	th	फ्	ph	र्	r
ड्	ḍ	द्	d	ब्	b	ल्	l
ढ्	ḍh	ध्	dh	भ्	bh	व्	v
ण्	ṇ	न्	n	म्	m	श	ś
		ष्	ṣ	Anusvāra	ṁ		
		स्	s	Visarga :	ḥ		
		ह्	h				

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Abbreviations

AI : *Ancient India*, New Delhi.
AMM : *Catalogue of the Archaeological Museum at Mathura* by J. Ph. Vogel, Allahabad, 1910.
AŚ : *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya, ed. R. Shamasastry, third edn., Mysore.
ASR : *Archaeological Survey (of India) Reports.*
Baudh. : *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra*, ed. E. Hultzsch, Leipzig, 1884; Kasi Sanskrit Series, no. 104, Banaras, 1934.
BI : Bibliotheca Indica, Calcutta.
CCBM : *Catalogue of Coins in the British Museum, Ancient India* by J. Allan, New Delhi, 1975.
CII : *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, London and Ootacamund.
DK : *Dharmakośa* (in three parts), ed. Laxman Shastri Joshi, Wai, 1937-41.
EI : *Epigraphia Indica*, Calcutta and Delhi.
HDS : *History of the Dharmaśāstra*, vols. I-III, by P.V. Kane, Poona, 1930-46.
IA : *Indian Antiquary*, Calcutta.
IAR : *Indian Archeology—A Review*, New Delhi.
IHQ : *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Calcutta.
IHR : *The Indian Historical Review*, New Delhi.
JBAS : *Journal of Bengal Asiatic Society*, Calcutta.
JBRS : *Journal of Bihar Research Society*, Patna.
JESHO : *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Leiden.
JNSI : *Journal of the Numismatic Society of India*, Varanasi.
JRASB : *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Calcutta.
JUPHS : *Journal of the United Provinces Historical Society*, Lucknow.
Kātyā. : *Kātyāyana Smṛti*, ed. P.V. Kane, Bombay, 1933.

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Lüders List	: *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. X, 1909-10, Appendix.
Mārk. P.	: *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, Bibliotheca Indica, Calcutta, 1862.
MI	: *Mathura Inscriptions* by H. Lüders, ed. K.L. Janert, Göttingen, 1961.
NBP	: North Black Polished (Ware).
PGW	: Painted Grey Ware.
SBE	: *Sacred Books of the East Series.* Unless stated otherwise, all references to the law-books of Gautama, Vas(iṣṭha), Manu, Viṣ(ṇu), Nār(ada) and Bṛ(haspati) correspond to this series.
Sel. Inscrr.	: *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization*, I, by D.C. Sircar, Calcutta, 1942; Calcutta, 1965.
SII	: *South Indian Inscriptions*, 13 vols., Madras, 1890. (in progress).
Uvāsaga.	: *Uvāsagadasāo*,, ed. A.F. Rudolf Hoernle, Calcutta, 1890.
Yāj.	: *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* with Vīramitrodaya and Mitākṣarā, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, Banaras, 1930.

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Part I

Social History

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CHAPTER I

Historiography of the Ancient Indian Social Order*

THERE is hardly any work exclusively devoted to the history of the social structure in ancient India, but there are many books on the different aspects of this subject, especially the caste system. A recent writer has listed 5,000 books on caste.[1] But historians can claim very little credit for this vast amount of literature, which is largely the work of ethnologists, sociologists, statisticians, economists, missionaries, and caste organizations. Most of this material deals with caste in recent times. Nevertheless, books dealing with the origin and growth of caste are not so few as to make an exhaustive survey possible. Therefore this paper does no more than indicate some broad lines of historiography as revealed from important works on caste and such allied subjects as family, marriage, the position of women, etc., in ancient India.

The modern study of the ancient Indian social order owed its inception to the policy of the East India Company, which could not govern an alien people without some knowledge of their institutions. The preface to *A Code of Gentoo Laws*[2] one of the first English works which have some bearing on the early social history of India, states that 'the importance of the commerce of India and the advantages of a territorial establishment in Bengal' could be maintained only by 'an adoption of such original institutes of the country as do not intimately clash with the laws or interests of the conquerors.'[3] In his preface to the translation of the *Manusmṛti* (Calcutta, 1794), Sir William Jones, the father of modern Indology, adds that if this policy is pursued, 'the

*This survey is limited to publications till the middle of 1950s.

[1]Stated by J.H. Hutton, *Caste in India*, sec. ed. (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. ix. This seems to be the work on W.H. Gilbert, *Caste in India*, cyclostyled copy (Washington, 1948). I have been able to see only Pt. I of this work which contains 1,970 entries.

[2]London, 1976.

[3]*Vivādārṇavasetu*, trans. into English by N.B. Halhed, translator's preface, p. ix. This work was translated from English into German in 1778.

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well-directed industry, of many millions of Hindu subjects . . . would largely add to the wealth of Britain.'[1] Four years later, on the basis of these sources, Colebrooke wrote an essay on 'Enumeration of Indian Classes,'[2] 'which appeared to him among the most remarkable institutions of India.'[3] Soon after (1818) those sources were utilized by Mill to describe the caste system in his *History of India*. While discussing the disabilities of the śūdras he came to the conclusion that the vices of caste subordination were carried to a more destructive point among the Hindus than among any other people,[4] and remarked that the hideous society of the Hindus continued in his times. But from the same sources Elphinstone (1841) deduced that the condition of the śūdras 'was much better than that of the public slaves under some ancient republics, and indeed, than that of the villains of the Middle Ages, or any other servile class with which we are acquainted'.[5] He also perceived that such a servile class did not exist any longer in his time.[6]

From the beginning of the 19th century the sharp contrast between the rising industrial society of England and the decaying feudal society of India attracted the attention of educated intellectuals and particularly of those who received western education, such as the students of the Hindu College, Calcutta. They realised that the practices of sati, lifelong widowhood, polygamy, child marriage, caste endogamy and purdah system were great obstacles to national progress. As Sir R.G. Bhandarkar put it in 1894; "If we have to march along with the progressive races of the West . . . our social institutions must improve . . . There can be no advancement politically without social and moral advancement."[7] But the weapons that the reformers employed to remove these obstacles and to lay the foundations of a better social order were not those of the progressive nations of the West but of the ancient Indian society. These were not weapons of reason drawn from the armoury of rationalism and utilitarianism, which exercised a strong

[1] *Institutes of Hindu Law*, preface, p. xix. cf. Discourse of Colebrooke in the first general meeting of *RAS* (15 March 1823), *Essays* (London, 1873), I, 1-2.

[2] *Essays*, II, 157-70. [3] ibid., 157.

[4] James Mill, *The History of India* (London, 1820), II, 166; I, 166-69, 169, fn. 1. It seems that Mill's generalizations about the history of India exercised the most dominant influence on later British historians.

[5] *The History of India* (London, 1841), I, 34.

[6] ibid., 107. [7] R.G. Bhandarkar, *Collected Works*, II, 513.

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hold on the minds of the western intellectuals in the 18th and the early 19th century, but those of authority taken from the armoury of the Dharmaśāstras.

The leaders of social reforms, who were mainly middle class intellectuals or scions of zamindar families educated in English schools, never tried to win public opinion by proving to the people the absurdity of the age-old social evils. But they tried to persuade the public to their point of view by convincing them that social reforms were in consonance with the sacred texts. This gave rise to an acrid controversy between the reformers who tried to justify social changes on the strength of passages from the Dharmśāstra and the orthodox Hindus who tried to uphold the existing social practices by quoting from the same texts. Memoranda and memorials, meant for enlisting the support of the British bureaucrats, did not so much appeal to their reason and progressive social outlook as tried to impress upon them the desirability of these reforms in the light of the old texts. In part this revivalist attitude was the result of the policy of the British, who from the beginning of their rule did not like to meddle with the religious and social affairs of India, although the policy was set forth in so many words only in 1858.

The role of ancient texts can be seen in the movement for social reforms in Bengal, Punjab and Maharashtra. In Bengal the reform movement began with the agitation of Rammohan Roy against sati. In 1818 he published his first tract against sati, in which he tried to show that according to the Śāstras it was not the best way for the salvation of woman.[1] Similarly his opponents tried to prove that this practice enjoyed the sanction of the old Hindu texts. They established in 1828 an institution called Dharmasabha. It was led by Raja Radhakanta Dev, who edited the famous modern Sanskrit Dictionary *Śabdakalpadruma* and naturally enjoyed the support of a large number of pandits who cooperated not only in the preparation of the dictionary but also in the compilation of the texts directed against the abolition of sati. We need not exaggerate the importance of ancient citations in bringing about the abolition of the sati system for many more could be produced in favour of its continuance. In this particular case the enlightened opinion of William Bentinck was of more moment than the texts marshalled by Raja Rammohan Roy. Here it may be stated

[1] *The English Works of Rammohan Roy* (Calcutta, 1901), introduction, xviii, ii, 123-92.

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in passing that in the 19th century the British were more responsive to the demand for changes in social practice than in administration. This was mainly because the changes touched only the outer fringe of the existing social structure and did not in any way affect the position of zamindars whom Bentinck considered the supporters of British Raj. Again the ultimate political implications of these social reforms in helping national integration were not realised by them. For when similar reforms came to be demanded by nationalist leaders in the present century, the British resisted these stubbornly.

In the middle of the 19th century ancient texts were quoted in favour of the abolition of polygamy, which prevailed among the kulīn brāhmaṇs of Bengal. The Association of Friends submitted to the Legislative Council a petition, in which it quoted verses from the ninth chapter of the law-book of Manu to explain the conditions under which a husband could have a second wife.[1] If the wife suffered from barrenness, adultery, garrulousness, and gave birth to only female children, etc., she could be superseded by another wife. The petitioners further showed on the basis of Yājñavalkya that if the wife was obedient, skilful in business, produced male children, remained loyal to her husband, etc., the husband had no right whatsoever to separate from her and take another wife.[2] They contended that the kulīn brahmins were having more than one wife in violation of these instructions of the Dharmaśāstra, which they should not be allowed to do by law.[3]

They further prayed that children born of such marriages should be considered illegitimate and should not be entitled to any share in property.[4] In the opinion of a contemporary paper all this was done by educated natives who did not command adequate influence in their community to effect the necessary reforms and therefore resorted to those extraordinary measures.[5] But this alerted the orthodox Hindus who formed associations to thwart the movement for reforms. Awareness of the ancient texts caused some awakening among the high-caste Hindus, but in spite of their quotations from the ancient law-books and the argument that the original kulinism permitted

[1] *Intelligenster*, 16 July 1855.
[2] ibid. [3] ibid.
[4] *Eastern Star*, 8 December 1855.
[5] ibid.

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marriage only within certain circles the reformers did not succeed in abolishing polygamy by law.

The efforts of reformers met more success in their movement for the intfoduction of widow remarriage, in which the value of ancient texts was better propagated. It was Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar who first ransacked the Smṛti literature to be able to establish that marriage of widows was sanctioned by the Śāstras.[1] The champions of the reform gave publicity to the text of Parāśara that a women can take a second husband when her first husband is dead, destroyed, is impotent, has become an ascetic, or has fallen from the duties of his varṇa.[2] This was countered by the orthodox pandits on the ground that the text of Parāśara did not enjoy any authority in ancient times. In a way they were right for the law-book of Parāśara, which was comparatively liberal, was finally compiled in about the 8th century AD and hence did not command much prestige before Gupta times. The crucial passage occurs only in Nārada and some later Purāṇas such as the *Agni* and the *Garuḍa*.[3]

Connected with the legalisation of widow remarriage was the problem of the legal recognition of sons born of such marriages, so that they might inherit the property of their father. It was possible to produce texts in favour of such sons as are known *paunarbhava* in the Dharmaśāstras but difficult to prove that they were entitled to a share in property like the sons born of regular marriage. Since the lower caste people did not possess much property worth the name they could afford the luxury of widow remarriage, but not the higher caste people in whose case it would create real complications. In fact this was one of the main reasons why certain high-caste Hindus opposed the reform strongly.

Thus the struggle for social reforms was a vital factor in the study of ancient texts. It consisted of a series of battles of precedents, which reminds us of the constitutional conflict between the King and the Parliament in the Stuart period. Each side tried to build its case on the past precedents, which were called to the aid of the present controversies.

[1]Isvarachandra Vidyasagara, *Marriage of Hindu Widows*, reprint of the English version of two pamphlets written in Bengali in 1855, Calcutta, 1976. Around 1855, reprints of the first pamphlet reached a record number of 15,000 copies. ibid., p. ix.

[2]IV, 30. [3]107. 28.

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It is not without significance that the leading advocates of reforms in the 19th century were without exception great scholars of Sanskrit. This was true of Raja Rammohan Roy, but more so of Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, who was the principal of Sanskrit College, Calcutta. Swami Dayananda was a profound scholar of Vedic Sanskrit and based all his arguments for reform on the ancient Vedic texts. Similarly R.G. Bhandarkar, who was an active member of the All-India Social Conference was a renowned scholar of classical texts. His *First* and *Second Book*(s) *of Sanskrit* are the earliest textbooks prepared by an Indian for learning Sanskrit through the medium of English. Of these reformers Vidyasagar and Bhandarkar were primarily scholars, but they were deeply conscious of their social role and played an important part in the social movements of their times, Except Dayananda all these personalities lived in contact with the British in some way or the other. In fact it was not the study of ancient texts which originated modern reforms but the need for modern reforms that led to the study of ancient texts, which in its turn gave the reformers the tongue to speak to their people. Therefore although the primary impulse for reforms came from contact with the modern way of life, only a resurrection of what the reformers considered to be ancient values facilitated the course of the reforms.

Why the reformers harped on ancient texts is difficult to explain. When they tailored the texts to suit their ideas they continued the old tradition of adjusting them to the changing social conditions. They did not justify reforms on grounds of reason and utility because they did not find the soil receptive. Without any appreciable progress in science and industrialisation, the country did not provide the requisite material basis in which rationalist ideas could fructify. That the reformers talked about the texts to the credulous Hindu masses is understandable, but why they approached the British administrators on the same lines is not easy to appreciate. In any case they appear to be consistent in their arguments.

A detailed examination of the arguments adduced in support of social reforms in the 19th century might expose the unhistorical interpretations to which the ancient texts were subjected by the interested parties. But it is certain that in convincing the British rulers and moulding Indian public opinion-which obviously meant the opinion of the high-caste, kulīn, landed Hindus or of their members educated through the medium of English—ancient values

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played a great part. The procedure also set the pattern for preparing the case for fundamental changes in the social structure in subsequent times. The same line of argument was refurnished to buttress economic and political reforms in the 20th century. Those who demanded the abolition of the Permanent Settlement pointed to the absence of landed intermediaries in the past, and those who fought for a better political order pointed to the presence of constitutional monarchy, republics and above all Ram Raj in the past.

In the seventies Swami Dayanand, the founder of the Ārya Samāj, brought out a collection of original Sanskrit texts called the *Satyārtha-prakāśa* to support widow remarriage, rejection of caste based on birth,[1] and the śūdras' right to Vedic education.[2] We do not know how far the early social reformers drew inspiration from the contemporary works of Muir,[3] who tried to prove that the belief in the origin of the four varṇas from the primeval man did not exist in ancient times,[4] and from those of Weber, who presented the first important critical study of the caste system on the basis of the Brāhmaṇas and the Sūtras.[5] In the eighties of the same century R. C. Dutt in his work *Civilization in Ancient India*, which enjoyed great influence and popularity,[6] carried forward the reformist approach to the study of ancient Indian society. While pointing out that modern Hindus lose sight of the spirit of the ancient faith, he regrets that the use of spirituous liquor and even crimes do not involve loss of caste in modern times, but penalties are reserved for widow marriage, intercaste marriage, social intercourse among people descended from the same vaiśya rank, and for voyages and foreign travel. He emphasizes[7] that in ancient times caste never divided and disunited the Āryan people, but rallied them as one man against the aborigines.[8] He regrets that in the course of time caste should have

[1] *Satyārtha-prakāśa* (Ajmer, Samvat 1966), fourth *samullāsa*, 83-92, 113-22.
[2] ibid., third *samullāsa*, 39, 73-74.
[3] John Muir, ed., *Original Sanskrit Texts* (London, 1872-74), I.
[4] ibid., 159-60.
[5] *Indische Studien*, hrsg. Albrecht Weber, X, 1868, 1-160.
[6] *A History of Civilization in Ancient India, based on Sanskrit Literture*, 4 vols. (Calcutta, 1889-90). The first edition of 1,000 copies of the first two vols. was out in 1890, and the work was translated into the vernaculars of Bombay, Madras, and the North Western Provinces (roughly modern U.P.). Another work of Dutt was adopted as a textbook in many schools in Bengal.
[7] ibid., II, 103. [8] ibid., I, 240.

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degraded the vaiśyas to the rank of the śūdras.[1] The writer boasts that no ancient nation held their women in higher honour than the Hindus, but complains that the Hindus have been misjudged and wronged by writers unacquainted with their literature, who received their notions of the women of the East from Turkish and Arab customs.[2] Writing about a decade earlier (1867) than R.C. Dutt, a French woman writer, who wants her work to serve as a guide to the British in regenerating the conquered through the application of the practical spirit of Christianity, impresses upon the Indians the high position of women in ancient times in order that they may emulate the great characters and sublime actions as depicted in the epics.[3]

On the occasion of the introduction of the Age of Consent Bill in 1891, Sir R.G. Bhandarkar brought out a well-documented pamphlet citing Sanskrit texts to establish that a girl should be married only when she attains maturity. On the other hand B.G. Tilak, to whom any stick was good enough to beat the alien rulers, cited texts against this Bill.[4]

This tendency to quote ancient scriptures in support of modern reforms can be well summed up in the words of R.G. Bhandarkar (1895): 'In ancient times girls were married after they had attained maturity, now they must be married before; widow marriage was then in practice, now it has entirely gone out . . . . Interdining among the castes was not prohibited, now the numberless castes cannot have intercommunications of that nature.'[5]

But the attempt of Indian scholars to present their early social institutions in a form more acceptable to the modern mind did not always commend itself to western writers. Thus Sénart (1896) pointed out that the castes have been compared by Hindus of English upbringing with the social distinctions that exist among Europeans, but that they correspond only very remotely to western social classes.[6] Similarly Hopkins (1881) stated that the position of the śūdra was not different from that of the American house slave before 1860.[7] Reviewing Hopkins' generalizations, Hillebrandt (1896) held that the position of the

[1]ibid., 240-41. [2]ibid., 256-57.

[3]C. Bader, *The Woman in Ancient India* (London, 1930), 333-34.

[4]R.G. Bhandarkar, *Collected Works*, II, 538-83. Also see Bhandarkar's criticism of Jolly's article on the 'History of Child Marriage' in *Collected Works*.

[5]ibid., II, 522-23. [6]E. Sénart, *Caste in India* (London, 1930), 12-13.

[7]E.W. Hopkins, *Mutual Relations of the Four Castes in Manu* (Leipzig, 1881), 102.

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śūdras should be judged in comparison with the slaves of the ancient world and not in the context of developments in later times.[1]

Criticizing Hopkins, Ketkar (1911) complains that European writers are influenced by their ideas of racial discrimination against the Negroes, and hence unduly exaggerate this in their treatment of the caste system.[2] Ambedkar (1917) also points out that, impregnated by colour prejudices, the European scholars have unduly emphasized the role of colour in the caste system.[3] There seems to be some force in this argument, for Risley (1908) stated that the conquering Āryans behaved towards the conquered Dravidians in the same way as some planters in America behaved towards the African slaves whom they imported.[4] Keith was of the opinion that the Āryan contact with the aborigines raised questions of purity of blood very like those which at present agitate the Southern States of the U.S.A. or the whole of the white people in South Africa.[5]

Risley advanced the view that in India races were transformed into castes, that the process of racial fusion was arrested long ago and that therefore no national type could develop as in Europe,[6] deducing therefrom that there were no prospects of the rise of nationalism in India.[7] This view was challenged in articles such as 'Varṇāśrama Dharma and Race Fusion in Ancient India' (1917).[8] 'Intercaste Marriage in Buddhist India' (1919),[9] 'Foreign Elements in the Hindu Population,'[10] which were written to demonstrate the assimilative character and resilience of ancient Indian society. Attempts were made to prove that Indian society had attained a large measure of ethnic-cultural unity, [11]which could form the basis of further national development.

But generally the reformist and nationalist school has derived support from the works of western writers, who evaluate ancient Indian society in a manner different from that in which they judge

[1]A. Hillebrandt, 'Brāhmaṇen und Śūdras,' *Festschrift für Karl Weinhold* (Breslau, 1896), 57.

[2]S.V. Ketkar, *History of Caste in India*, 2 vols. (New York, 1909; London, 1911), I, 9, 78, fn. 3. [3]*Indian Antiquary*, XLVI, 1917, 94.

[4]H.H. Risley, *The People of India* (London, 1915), 275.

[5]*Cambridge History of India*, I, 125.

[6]H.H. Risley, op. cit., 5, 26. [7]ibid., 293.

[8]B.K. Sarkar, *Modern Review*, 1917, 211 ff.

[9]R.P. Chandra, *Modern Review*, 1919, 595 ff.

[10]D.R. Bhandarkar, *Indian Antiquary*, XL, 1911, 7 ff.

[11]B.N. Dutt, *Studies in Indian Social Polity* (Calcutta, 1944).

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ancient Indian polity. They point out that oriental despotism was the chief characteristic of the political life of ancient India, a generalization which could very well serve as a justification for the continuity of British rule. But on the whole they present ancient Indian society in a favourable light, which could naturally provide the basis for several social reforms, rendered necessary owing to the needs of administration and introduced by the British during the nineteenth century. Apart from the belief in the community of race and language between the Indo-Āryans and Europeans, the idealization of ancient Indian society was due to the anti-Mohammadan attitude of the British, which is evident in some writings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[1] To this was added the admiration for primitive forms of society which is noticeable in eighteenth-century writers such as Rousseau.[2] Although after 1857, and especially from about the end of the nineteenth century, it was felt necessary by many members of the administration to stress divisions of caste, race, language, etc., as a shield against the growing nationalist demands,[3] this attitude was reflected only in the Census Reports and very little affected western writings on ancient Indian society, which continued to follow the old tradition.

The main trend noticeable in the works of recent Indian writers such as Ketkar, Dutt, and Ghurye is to present the caste system in such a way as may help to recast it in response to present requirements.[4] Works on the position of women in ancient India display the same tendency. In his work D.N. Mitter attempts to refute the generally accepted doctrine of the perpetual tutelage of women in Hindu Law.[5] A.S. Altekar indicates the general lines on which the various problems of Hindu women should be tackled in order to get a fairly satisfactory solution.[6] In a recent work it is argued that the scheme of *āśramas* was designed to give wide scope to individuals in

[1] J.Z. Holwell, *Interesting Historical Events Relative to the Provinces of Bengal and the Empire of Indostan* (London, 1765-71), I, 5; III, 13.

[2] Holwell states that 'the primitive Hindoos . . . subsisted for a long series, of ages in holiness, peace, tranquillity and happiness'. ibid. III, 218.

[3] Several such statements are quoted in P.L. Narsu, *The Essence of Buddhism* (Madras, 1912), 154, and by G.S. Ghurye, *Caste and Class in India* (Bombay, 1950), 176-77.

[4] Ketkar, op. cit., p. 9; Radhakrishnan's foreword to P.H. Prabhu's *Hindu Social Institutions* (London, 1939). The works of Dutt and Ghurye display a better historical sense, but see Dutt, op. cit., preface, xvi.

[5] *The Position of Women in Hindu Law* (Calcutta, 1912), preface, *a*.

[6] *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization* (Banaras, 1938), preface, i.

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the choice of a vocation in life which was best suited to their intellectual capacity and mental inclinations.[1] This is obviously projecting the modern idea of individualism on to ancient society, for, in fact, generally the varṇa system gave hardly any option to the individual to choose his occupation, and, as to the *āśramas*, the śūdra was entitled only to the life of a householder.

Thus it would appear that problems of ancient Indian society have been largely studied, especially by Indians, against the background of the necessity for social reform. The dominant motives of reform and nationalism have undoubtedly produced valuable works on India's early social life. They helped to establish that the four varṇas existed as social classes in the Vedic period and that multiplication of the *jātis* and caste restrictions developed in the period of the Dharmaśāstras. It was recognized that large numbers of foreign and tribal peoples were absorbed into brāhmaṇical society. It also came to be accepted that widow marriage and *niyoga* prevailed in earlier times when the practices of child marriage and satī were absent.

But what appeared to be seamy and ugly in comparison with modern standards came to be either ignored or explained away unconvincingly. For instance, it was argued that the disabilities of the śūdras did not reduce their happiness or wellbeing.[2] In justification of child marriage in the later period it came to be urged that this practice helps a girl to know whom she has to love, before any sexual consciousness has awakened in her.[3] Similarly, the permanent dependence of woman came to be justified by arguing that she would make herself ridiculous by claiming an identity of temperament and functions with man.[4] Again, since the need for such reforms as the abolition of satī, widow marriage, divorce, etc., was most pressing in the case of the members of the upper varṇas, due attention could not be paid to the nature of the social practices of the lower orders. Furthermore, the reformists found it difficult to explain and interpret the contradictory statments in the Dharmaśāstras, which constitute our main source for the social

[1] R.C. Majumdar, ed., *The Age of Imperial Unity* (Bombay, 1951), 553.

[2] On the basis of the *Śukranīti-sāra*, B.K. Sarkar, *Hindu Sociology* (Allahabad, 1920), 92-95. cf. K.V. Rangaswami Aiyangar, *Indian Cameralism* (Madras, 1949), 85. [3] Ketkar, op. cit., 32-33.

[4] H.C. Chakladar, 'Social life in Ancient India,' *The Cultural Heritage of India*, issued by Sri Ramakrishna Birth Centenary Publication Commitee, (Calcutta, 1937), III, 204.

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history of ancient India. They picked out and focused light on the passages which supported their case without bothering to determine the dominant features of society in different periods and regions.

It is this tendency to concentrate on favourable aspects of early social life that accounts for the almost complete absence of works on the position of the śūdras in ancient India. Even European writers gave their attention mainly to the study of the upper classes of Hindu society. Thus Muir devoted 188 pages to the legends of struggles between brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas.[1] Hopkins (1889) presented a comprehensive study of the 'Position of Ruling Caste in Ancient India'.[2] The admirable work of Fick (1897) on the social organization of north-eastern India also mainly confined itself to the treatment of kṣatriyas, brāhmaṇas, and *gahapatis* or *seṭṭhis*. It is difficult to explain these writers' lack of interest in the fortunes of the lower orders unless we suppose that their vision was circumscribed by the dominant class outlooks both of their own age and of the age they studied. The only monograph on the śūdras so far published is by a well-known Indian politician, who confines himself to the question of their origin.[3] The author is entirely dependent for his source-material on translations,[4] and moreover, he seems to have worked with the fixed purpose of proving a high origin for the śūdras—a tendency which has been very much in evidence among the educated sections of lower caste people in recent times. A single passage of the *Śānti Parvan*, which states that the śūdra Paijavana performed sacrifice, is sufficient to establish the thesis that śūdras were originally kṣatriyas.[5] The author does not care to analyse the complex of various circumstances which led to the formation of the labouring class known as the śūdras.

Similarly our knowledge of the untouchables has not advanced much beyond what we learn from the school textbooks, quoting from Fa-hsien and Hsüan Tsang. The work on this subject by one of the present leaders of this class advances the ingenious theory that the roots of untouchability lay in the contempt for Buddhism and in the practice

[1] op. cit , I, chap. IV.

[2] *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 1889, XIII, 7-376.

[3] B.R. Ambedkar, *Who were the Shudras?* (Bombay, 1946).

[4] ibid., preface, p. iv.

[5] In recent caste movements many śūdra castes claim to be kṣatriyas and even brāhmaṇas. Thus the Dusādhas claim to be the descendants of Duḥśāsana, and the Goālās those of the Yadus. The process, noted in Census Reports, is now called Sanskritisation, although many caste leaders do not know Sanskrit.

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of beef-eating.[1] Further, the few articles on slavery do not improve much upon the findings of Rhys Davids on that subject. A work on the origin, growth, nature, and extent of slavery in ancient India still remains a desideratum.[2] Again, although it is argued that the disabilities and privileges of the varṇas should be looked upon with the greatest suspicion, no serious attempt has been made to inquire into the nature of economic and politico-legal relations into which the members of the various varṇas enter with one another. Generalizations such as 'caste did not cause poverty and did not divide the city into two parts like the East End and West End of London'[3] or 'in ancient India there was no concentration of the prestige of birth, influence of wealth and political office which imparts an aristocratic tinge to social organization and sustains aristocratic government'[4] need a careful examination. Because of their reforming outlook the writers have not bothered themselves about unpleasant questions such as the repeated joint notices of woman and śūdras or of woman and property in ancient Indian literature. Such an attitude has also prevented an investigation into the traces of promiscuity, matriarchy, and the position of prostitutes in ancient India,[5] which may have also been the result of a disinclination to consider the theory almost universally held by nineteenth-century anthropologists, and still maintained by many, that marriage developed by way of hetaerism and matriarchate.[6] A pioneer attempt was made to examine such questions by S.C. Sarkar in his work *Some Aspects of the Earliest Social History of India*,[7] but that line of research has not been pursued further.

The study of the lower orders in ancient India has not only been ignored, but, strange as it may seem, in some cases they appear to have been held in the same contempt by modern writers as they were held by the members of the upper varṇas in ancient times. It is stated that child marriage originated among the lower classes, while the Dharmaśāstra rules leave no doubt that it first began among the three upper

[1] B.R. Ambedkar, *The Untouchables* (New Delhi, 1948), chap. IV.

[2] D.R. Chanana's *Slavery in Ancient India* (New Delhi, 1960) is a valuable contribution, but it is based mainly on the Pāli texts.

[3] S.K. Das, *The Economic History of Ancient India* (Calcutta, 1944), 185.

[4] Majumdar, op. cit., 311; Beni Prasad, *The State in Ancient India* (Allahabad, 1928), 7-8.

[5] J.J. Meyer, however, devotes chapter IX to this subject. *Sexual Life in Ancient India* (London, 1952).

[6] ibid., 398. [7] London, 1928.

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varṇas.[1] It is said that women had a higher position among the upper classes, while the opposite seems to have been the case. The climax is reached when on the basis of his study of ancient Indian society a writer prescribes sexual self-control and abstinence for the 'Brāhmaṇ' and the use of contraceptives for people of the lowest varṇa.[2]

Most available works neither identify nor explain the chief phases in social evolution. Jolly's *Hindu Law and Custom*,[3] which is a text-book in many Indian universities, presents a good analysis of family life and the position of woman in Hindu society, but it does not present an integrated picture. Although the author discusses the dates of his sources, he fails to introduce this historical perspective in the treatment of his subject, with the result that we get very little idea of changes in the social order.[4] The only distinction made in such books is the one between Vedic and post-Vedic periods. Thanks to the pioneer labours of Europeans, especially German Indologists, the basic facts about the social organization during the Vedic period are fairly well established. Indians have not progressed much in this field. Their main concern has been to establish that all was good in the Vedic period and that degeneration set in post-Vedic times. The treatment of society in the *Cambridge History of India*, vol. I, is not done chronologically but literature-wise so that the total picture of society in a particular phase is lacking. By now the material bearing on social aspects in the Pāli texts has been examined by Fick, Rhys Davids and R.N. Mehta, in the Jain texts by J.C. Jain and B.C. Law, in the epics by Hopkins and Meyer, and in the Dharmaśāstras by Jolly, Jayaswal, Kane, R.C. Hazra and other scholars, but a complete sketch of the social structure on the basis of these sources is not to be found anywhere. The first important attempt of this kind has been made in the Bhāratīya Vidyā Bhavan series on *The History of Culture of the Indian People*, but it has suffered for three reasons. First, the Dharmasūtras and Gṛhyasūtras, which are definitely works of post-Vedic times, are included in the Vedic period. Secondly, writers have failed to distinguish between the didactic and narrative portions of the epics. And

[1] *Viṣṇu Smṛti*, *SBE*, VII, xxiv, 41 (with fn. on 41). The commentator seems to have projected later ideas in the explanation of this passage.

[2] G.H. Mees, *Dharma and Society* (The Hague, 1935), 189-90.

[3] Calcutta, 1928 (trans. from the German ed. of 1896).

[4] Jolly had reserved the treatment of classes and castes for his work *State Antiquities*, but it was never published.

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thirdly, since the sections on society have been done by several hands,[1] there is not much idea of development in the treatment of the theme. Probably the main reason for not stressing the process of social development has been the very widely held belief in the conservative and unchanging character of the Indian people.[2] Like the Chinese and the Egyptians, the Indians are believed to be an unchanging people.[3] Even those who subscribe to the materialist interpretation of history have paid very little attention to the fact of social development because of the basic formulation of Karl Marx about the unchanging character of Asian society before the advent of the Industrial Revolution. It is true that in the pre-Industrial period, unlike changes in dynasty, social changes could not have been rapid, but it would be wrong to proceed on the axiom that they were entirely absent.

Interest in the study of the ancient Indian social order in Europe and India has also been stimulated by a sense of revolt against the over-materialistic life which has been seen as the result of the progress of science and the Industrial Revolution. The old family life is being shattered and the bonds of the former control of man over woman are being loosened. Perhaps in order to restore the balance the old Indian ideal is invoked. In her book *Women in Ancient India* (1867), a French writer feels the necessity of refreshing 'ourselves' (i.e. Europeans) from more life-giving and generous sources from India where society has a sense of duty dominating all affections, and a feeling of respect for family life, all presenting a nearly Christian atmosphere.[4] She points out that the moral elevation of the Greeks was much below that of the Indians.[5] To quote the author, 'in what century, in what country, in what literature, could there be found a more admirable type than that of Sītā?'[6] Similar ideas are repeated by the German Indologist Meyer in 1915.[7] In his opinion no literature could provide more lovely songs of the faithful wife's love for her husband than the poem of Damayantī and that of Sāvitrī.[8] He further states that as regards woman the old Indian books display a deeply ethical spirit, a wholesomeness in contrast to the often empty frivolity—the nauseat-

[1]V.M. Apte, R.K. Mookerji, R.C. Majumdar, and U.N. Ghoshal.
[2]Majumdar, op. cit., III, 14.
[3]cf. E.J. Rapson, *Cambridge History of India*, I, 53-54.
[4]Bader, op. cit., preface, viii-ix. [5]op. cit., 223.
[6]op. cit., 222. [7]op. cit., 215, 340.
[8]op. cit., 215.

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ing filthiness and vulgarity—that marks most of the literature of the Middle Ages, old and modern French literature, and even many highly praised later and latest German writings.[1] Naturally the belief in progress does not make any sense to Meyer.[2] He feels the necessity of 'feeding on the marvellous works of the Buddha, Jesus, etc.,'[3] The tendency to prescribe precepts and practices of ancient Indian society as a panacea for the sociale vils of the West reaches its culimination in a work *Dharma and Society* by a minor Dutch Indologist G.H. Mees, published forty-seven years ago. The writer holds that the ideal of the varṇa system is of universal and permanent value and can be applied to all kinds of societies irrespective of time and place. He thinks that the varṇa ideal was a natural and organic hierarchy, which degenerated when artificial distinctions began to be made in the form of the caste system.[4] Scared by the exaltation of Labour and its desire to climb higher in the hierarchy of power,[5] he thinks that only the sense of varṇa (i.e. natural hierarchy) can unite people who are divided by class-consciousness into a whole.[6] Therefore he recommends that the West should benefit by realizing the fundamental composition of human society as developed in India.[7] He also seems to have some leaning towards Fascism and National-Socialism, which, in his opinion, are movements of the ruling varṇa to make an end of 'mixture of varṇas' in matters of government, for according to the theory of varṇa, classes corresponding to lower varṇas should have no legislative powers and should not criticize the government policy.[8]

The views of Mees have been treated in some detail because they also find favour with some Indian writers, who glorify the old system of family and varṇa to stem the tide of social change. Thus the specious argument of equality in spiritual rights, irrespective of sex and caste considerations, is advanccd to meet the demand for equality in material rights.[9] Some writers believe in certain intrinsic virtues of the old Hindu theory and conception of human life and organization,[10] which they boldly recommend for adoption by the whole world.

[1]ibid., 5.
[2]*Das Weib im altindischen Epos* (Leipzig, 1915), viii.
[3]ibid. [4]*Dharma and Society* (The Hague, London, 1935), 142.
[5]ibid., 180. [6]ibid., 149. [7]ibid., preface, xv.
[8]ibid., 188. [9]Chakladar, op. cit., 203-4.
[10]P.H. Prabhu, *Hindu Social Institutions* (3rd ed., Bombay, 1958), 336; cf. 344; Chakladar, op. cit., III, 170.

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Prabhu's work (a textbook in several Indian universities), which emphasizes such virtues and justifies varṇa on fundamental principles of ethics and psychology, has been criticized by P.V. Kane, a person of moderate views,[1] as a disappointing work from the practical point of view. K.V. Rangaswami Aiyangar seems to have made a study of the social structure as known from the Dharmaśāstras, and especially from Manu, in order to present the varṇa system as a shield against all equalizing tendencies let loose by modern industrial society. He looks back with horror upon the idea of 'a classless, sexless (?), equalitarian society, a "secular democracy" sustained and guided by frequent plebiscites of the proletarians'.[2] He sets forth the purpose of his books on the social and political aspects of Manu in these words:

> If the Hindu scheme of life 'has no other value except as exposing the unstable foundations of many modern social and political beliefs—such as the equality of the sexes, the equal rights of men, and of equal weight to everyone in society; of the value of only a materialistic view of life and life's problems; of the superiority of environment of heredity; of the exclusively material basis of social betterment; of the belief that the proper standard for remuneration is material productive capacity, etc.—it will have served its purpose,'[3]

It is difficult to pass judgement on the merits of such books. The dominant motives of reform have produced valuable works, but probably the object of defending the social *status quo* has not made any significant addition to our knowledge of the early history of India's social structure; such books are too deeply saturated with prejudices.

An important point for consideration is an inquiry into the nature of the forces which, according to all these writers, influence social developments in ancient India. This can be best illustrated by examining their perception of the causes of the origin and growth of caste. Racial and occupational factors have been ascribed to explain the origin of the castes, but this is also attributed to the 'essentially particularist instinct of the Indian people.'[4] It is suggested that the brāh-

[1]Kane does not consider it feasible to destroy the whole edifice of the caste system in the near future, *History of the Dharmaśāstra* (Poona, 1930), II, part I, 22.

[2]*Some Aspects of the Hindu View of Life According to the Dharmaśāstra* (Baroda, 1932), 11.

[3]*Aspects of the Social and Political System of Manusmṛti* (Lucknow 1949), 197-98.

[4]Risley, op. cit., p. 79.

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maṇas first extended the principle of exclusiveness to the śūdras and then to all the other varṇas, and this led to the growth of the caste system.[1] The *ultimate basis* of the caste system has been traced to two doctrines:[2] (i) the doctrine of the religious unity of the family, and (ii) the doctrine of the *svakarma* which lays on every man the obligation to do his duty in that state of life in which he is born,[3] suggesting thereby that these doctrines arose first and the caste system came next. It is significant that a common reason assigned for the origin of the caste system by both European and Indian writers such as Fick, Sénart, Risley, Ghurye, etc., has been the Indian predilection for symmetry and their love for classification.[4] But they hardly indicate the premises from which they have drawn such an important deduction. Risley enumerates the pecularities of the Indian intellect which have promoted the growth of the caste system. These according to him are: 'its (i.e. the Indian intellect's)[5] lax hold of facts, its indifference to action, its absorption in dreams, its exaggerated reverence for tradition, its passion for endless division and sub-division, its acute sense of minute technical distinctions, its pedantic tendency to press a principle to its farthest logical conclusion and its remarkable capacity for imitating and adapting social ideas and usages of whatever origin.'[6] Risley thinks that a superstructure of fiction has specially contributed to the growth of the caste instinct,[7] for, in his opinion, fictions of various kinds have contributed largely to the development of early societies in all parts of the world.[8] Similarly, discussing the decay of social organization in India an Indian writer ascribes this decline not so much to external opposition or to any inherent weakness in the ideal but to a falling off from the ideal itself.[9] Thus it would appear that ideas and ideals are represented as playing an important part in the origin, development and decay of social organization.

Many writers believe that religious ideas have moulded the social history of India. Jolly holds that in India, as in other oriental coun-

[1]R.C. Majumdar, *Corporate Life in Ancient India* (Calcutta, 1922), 350.
[2]Italics mine. [3]Rapson, op. cit., I, 54.
[4]R. Fick, *Social Organization in North-East India* (Calcutta, 1920), 282; Ghurye, op. cit., 159; Majumdar, op. cit., 385.
[5]Bracketed portion mine.
[6]Risley, op. cit., 275-76.
[7]ibid., 273. [8]ibid., 275.
[9]Chakladar, op. cit., 208.

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tries, the law (*vyavahāra*) is an integral part of religion and ethics.[1] Winternitz points out that the structure of society is influenced through religious ideas, which are nowhere so deep in the life of the people, especially in the life of women, as in India.[2] This he derives from a general theory that the entire cultural development of mankind is shaped to an immense degree by religion.[3] In the case of India such a belief is also shared by Fick, who considers religious differences as an important cause of the origin of the caste. Indian writers also look upon religious injunctions as one of the reasons of the growth of the caste system. Thus there is a fundamental presupposition that ideas and ideals, particularly religious have played a vital part in shaping the course of social developments in ancient India. This discussion can be closed with the statement of an eminent scholar of ancient Indian civilization that the harmony of the three pursuits of life was the ideal which formed the background of social life in ancient India.[4]

As against the idealist conception applied to the study of ancient Indian social structure, its study, in recent times has been taken up by some writers who seem to have been influenced by the materialist conception of history. A.N. Bose,[5] S.A. Dange,[6] B.N. Dutt,[7] G.F. Ilyin,[8] D.D. Kosambi,[9] and Walter Ruben[10] may be placed in this

[1] *Hindu Law and Custom*, 1.

[2] *Die Frau im Brahmanismus* (Leipzig, 1920), 2; of 121.

[3] ". . . die ganze Kulturentwicklung der Menschheit in ungeheuren Masse "on der Religion beeinflusst worden ist.' ibid,, 1.

[4] R.C. Majumdar, *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 581.

[5] *Social and Rural Economy of Northern India*, 2 vols. (Calcutta, 1942-45).

[6] *India from Primitive Communism to Slavery* (Bombay, 1949). The book shows more schematicism than scholarship, but it has run into a third edition in a short time and has been translated into several languages.

[7] *Studies in Indian Social Polity* (Calcutta, 1944).

[8] 'Śūdras und Sklaven in den altindischen Gesetzbuchern' in *Sowjetwissenschaft*, 1952, no. 2, trans. from *Vestnik drevnei istorii*, 1950, no. 2, 94-107; 'Osobennosti Rabstva v drevnei Indii', *Vestnik drevnei istorii*, 1951, no. 1, 33-52.

[9] Articles in *Journal of the Bombay Branch, Royal Asiatic Society* and *Journal of the American Oriental Society; An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (Bombay, 1956). His book, *The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline* (London, 1965) became more popular. During the last twenty years since 1960 or so Kosambi, who died in 1966, has turned out to be the most influential historian of early Indian society and economy. Perhaps no other writer of the subject has been quoted, criticised and followed up so

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group. In spite of their sharing a common outlook these writers not only differ on the dating of literary sources, such as the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya and the Jātakas, but they also differ fundamentally on several other questions. While some hold that ancient Indian society was a 'slave society,' others argue that this is not true in the same sense as in the case of the other ancient societies. Again, while some argue that varṇa corresponds to the Marxian conception of economic class, others think that economic considerations cut across the hereditary social varṇas. But, excepting some articles by Kosambi, so far very little attention has been paid to the mode of production in ancient India, which, in the materialist view, determines the relations of production—economic, social, and political, Although some works by these writers appeared sufficiently early, it is significant that none has been mentioned in the bibliographies appended to the volumes on *The History and Culture of the Indian People* published by the Bhāritīya Vidyā Bhavan. It may be too much to assert that historical materialism can provide the only scientific approach to the investigation of the ancient Indian social structure, but its possibilities are still to be explored, and hence in any future study of ancient Indian society such a line of inquiry cannot be ignored.[1]

widely as he has been. Three memorial volumes issued from different places have been dedicated to him. The first to appear was R.S. Sharma in collaboration with V.N. Jha ed., *Indian Society: Historical Probings*, New Delhi, 1974; its second edition came out in 1977. For various assessments of Kosambi's historiography see D.N. Jha, "A Marxist View of Ancient Indian History,' *Das Capital Centenary Volume*, ed. Mohit Sen & M.B. Rao, New Delhi, 1968, 166-80; Romila Thapar, 'The Contribution of D.D. Kosambi to Indology', *The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bombay*, 52-53, 1977-78 (New Series), 365-84.

[10] *Einfuhrung in die Indienkunde* (Berlin, 1954).

[1] This suggestion was made in 1956, but appeared in print in 1961. During the last 20 years or so some serious investigation has been carried on these lines. Suvira Jaiswal's 'Studies in Early Indian Social History: Trends and Possibilities', published in *The Indian Historical Review*, VI, 1979-80, 1-63, devotes more than half of its nearly 40,000 words to the survey of works on social history published during the last 25 years. R.S. Sharma and D.N. Jha, 'The Economic History of India up to AD 1200: Trends and Prospects,' *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, XVII, 1974, 48-80, touches on this problem to some extent.

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CHAPTER II

Stages in Social Evolution and Class Differentiation

SOME people think that from ancient times the Indian society has been based on the caste system and that only in recent times it has started changing under the stress of industrialisation. Western Indologists have succeeded in creating an image of a rigid, unchanging and sleeping society, which has been further reinformed by some sociologists and supporters of *sanātana dharma*, who credit Indian society with all kinds of eternal values and everlasting norms. But this is a false view of the history of Indian society. Changes in social formations are slow to detect, but the failure or the distinclination of scholars to uncover them does not mean their absence. If we go by analogy, stratification in Indian society should be viewed rather in the geological or archaeological sense than in terms of purity, rigidity and heredity. We may look for layers in the social evolution in the same manner just as we look for layers of deposits at an excavated site or for successive strata in an ancient text.

The chief characteristics of the caste system, which is considered unchanging, are restrictions[1] regarding marriage and social intercourse, heredity and hierarchy. Members of a caste can neither marry outside their caste nor accept food from somebody who is of a lower caste. The notion of high and low is linked up with birth and heredity. Once a person is born as a brāhmaṇa, he is regarded as such and so are his descendants. Theoretically nobody can change his caste in lifetime. All the four main varṇas or social orders and numerous castes which come under the one or the other varṇa are arranged in some order of ritual ranking, The brāhmaṇa occupies the highest rank, and the śūdra the lowest. The kṣatriya is second, and the vaiśya third in ranking. The untouchables are sometimes made a part of the śūdra varṇa, and sometimes they are called the fifth varṇa. Apart from these traits of the caste system, till recent

[1]For those who know both Hindi and English these traits can be summed up *as betī, roṭī*, purity and heredity.

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times, by and large, members of the two upper varṇas held landed property, the vaisyas were traders, the śūdras were peasants, artisans and agricultural labourers, and the untouchables were mainly low artisans and agricultural labourers.

Various explanations are given for the origin of the caste system. It is said that all human beings are divided into four categories according to their natural aptitudes and endowments. Some possess high spiritual and intellectual qualities, others fighting qualities, still others producing qualities, and accordingly they are placed in various categories. The caste system is therefore based on natural and inherent attributes found in the mankind. It is therefore called a contribution of the Hindu genius and credited with ensuring continuity and durability to Hindu society in spite of foreign onslaughts. But to think of natural qualities of human beings without taking account of the social and material environment in which they are born and nurtured would be going too far. Such a theory of the origin of the caste system obviously serves the interests of those who want to perpetuate this system. It sounds like the statement of Aristotle, according to whom certain people are born to command and others born to obey; the first become masters and the second become slaves.

According to a second theory the caste system is based on notions of purity and impurity. The brāhmaṇas possess the purity of the first degree, the kṣatriyas of the second degree, and so on. The ritual ranking of the varṇas and jātis is based on their relative purity. But the exponents of this theory do not realise that notions of purity and impurity found in primitive and ancient societies outside India did not give rise to the caste system. In the case of India also even working in leather was not regarded impure in Vedic times. In the Vedic age artisans including leatherworkers were parts of the tribal community called *viś*, but in post-Vedic times the emergent classes of priests and warriors not only discarded manual and artisanal labour but hated those who practised it. In fact the more they moved away from physical labour and primary production the more pure and noble they came to be regarded.

There is a third theory which explains the origin of caste as a legacy from the aboriginal tribal communities of India. According to it every tribe is divided into a number of clans, and members of a clan marry within the tribe but outside the clan. When such a tribe is absorbed as a caste in the brāhmaṇical system it continues to marry

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within the tribe or caste and refuses to have social intercourse with other castes. There is no doubt that once the caste system was set up tribes were converted into castes, but the earliest history of tribal amalgamations would show that tribes entered into marriage relations with one another as a result of war and trade. Marriage served as a form of exchange of women between groups, and this exchange was considered necessary to keep life going. Insistence on marriage within the caste began because of the need of maintaining the privileges of the upper orders, which automatically barred the lower orders from having social intercourse with the upper castes and condemned them to marriage within their circles.

A fourth theory accounts for the origin of the caste system in terms of the division of labour. It is said that the need for occupational division leading to more production and economic efficiency gave rise to castes. There is some validity in this theory. But what is ignored is the hereditary aspect of the caste system. In Vedic times castes were occupational in nature, and change from one occupation to the other was possible. But over the centuries this change became impossible. What is further important, division of labour was effected in such a manner that brāhmaṇas or priests and kṣatriyas or warriors were withdrawn from direct production, which was placed in the hands of the vaiśyas and śūdras.

The origin and growth of the caste system can be better appreciated if we bear in mind that caste is a form of social differentiation. Since social differentiation arises out of social conflicts and unequal distribution of resources and produce, the origin and growth of the caste cannot be understood without a study of social processes which again are intimately connected with changes in material life.

Early Indian society is also called Asiatic and unchanging on the ground that it had no social class which could work as a lever for change. It are argued that the king was a despot because the subjects depended on irrigational facilities provided by him. His kingdom consisted of villages which were little worlds in themselves, each based on a blending of agriculture and handicrafts. But in most parts of India irrigation was neither badly needed nor always provided by the centre. In ancient times because of taxes, tributes, and trade, villages were tied up with towns, and there was an active class of priests and warrior-nobles who acted as organisers of the whole system, and operated between the king and his subjects. Hence the picture of

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unchanging society based on self-sufficient villages and presided over by a despot has to be discarded.

Nor can the ancient society be called a slave society. The existence of slaves in good numbers in the age of the Buddha in the middle Gangetic zone cannot be denied. In the Maurya period large state farms seem to have been worked with the help of slaves and hired labourers. It is likely that 150,000 people captured in Kaliṅga by Aśoka were made to work in farms and mines. But by and large slaves in ancient India were used for household work. In spite of a few rich landowners, the dominant unit of production till Gupta times was the small peasant family, which chiefly depended on its own labour aided by the help of slaves and hired labourers. In contrast to this phenomenon numerous slaves worked in farms and mining factories in Greece and Rome. It is estimated that in the age of Pericles when Athens was at the highest of glory the slaves outnumbered its citizens. This may be exaggerated, but the number of slaves in Greek and Roman societies was large enough to make their production slave-based. However in India for nearly a thousand years, from the age of the Buddha to that of the Guptas, the real basis of production was provided by the free peasants called vaiśyas whose efforts were supplemented by śūdra slaves, artisans and labourers.

But this vaiśya-śūdra formation is not found in Vedic times, especially in the age of the *Ṛgveda*. The early Vedic society was primarily pastoral in which tribal elements predominated. The term for cow (*gau*) in different declensions occurs 176 times in the Family Books. Cattle were considered to be synonymous with wealth (*rayi*), and a wealthy person was called *gomat*. Terms for battle such as *gaviṣṭi*, *goṣu*, *gavyat*, *gavya* and *gavcṣeṇa* were derived from cattle, which was the measure of distance (*gavyuti*) and also of wealth and wergeld. *Gopa* or *gopati* was the epithet given to the king. In the life of the family the importance of cow is indicated by the use of the term *duhitṛ*, one who milks, for daughter. Gods were divided into four categories, heavenly (*divya*), earthly (*pārthiva*), cowborn (*gojāta*), and watery (*āpya*), which again attests the importance of cows. So intimate was the acquaintance of the Vedic people with kine that when they came across the buffalo in India they called it *govāla* just as the Babylonians, when they first saw the horse, called it the ass of the mountains. The buffalo also came to be known as *gaurī*, again a term connected with cow. Although we come across artisans,

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agriculturists, priests and warriors even in the earlier portions of the *Ṛgveda*, the society of the Āryans in this period was basically tribal, pastoral and almost egalitarian. Spoils of war and cattle constituted the main forms of wealth, and in the absence of a strong food-producing economy they could not create such priests and warriors as would live primarily and permanently on the surplus provided by others. It was possible to have high ranks, but not high social classes. Inequalities caused by age and sex and also by possession of cattle and chariots were not absent, but still we do not have evidence for the existence of deep-seated classes based on the institutionalised unequal distribution of social surplus, resources and factors of production. Agriculture being still a secondary occupation, there was hardly any well-established peasantry whose produce could pave the way for the rise of higher classes. In the *Ṛgveda* people were organised not along varṇa lines or class lines but along tribal lines. The term *jana/viś* which stands for tribe is repeatedly mentioned, and apart from the use of the term *pañcajanāḥ* or five tribes the *Ṛgveda* attests the existence of Āryan and non-Āryan tribes. At this stage we hear of the *dāsa* or *dasyu* people but we do not notice the formation of a serving order in the form of the śūdras. Princes and priests had women slaves for domestic service, but their number may not have been large. Women, the producers of fighters and cattle-herders, were in great demand because men perished in perpetual tribal wars.

Even in the later Vedic phase agriculture had not advanced so much as to enable the peasants to produce much over and above the needs of their daily subsistence, with the result that taxes could not be collected and differentiation between those who produced and those who lived as parasites and managers of production could not emerge clearly. The main surplus available for distribution was the booty captured in tribal wars and occasional presents made to the tribal chief called raja. These were distributed in Vedic assemblies on the occasion of sacrifices, but a good portion of cattle and women slaves went to the tribal chief, and also to the priests who were supposed to have brought victories by pleasing the gods through their prayers and rituals. Towards the end of Vedic times, with more agriculture and the mixing of the Āryans and pre-Āryans there appeared seventeen kinds of priests to take care of different rituals in public sacrifices, the brāhmaṇa being only one of them. Gradually he superseded all the other types and became the sole representative of the priestly order.

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The explanatory part of later Vedic rituals, especially towards the end of the Vedic period, states that the brāhmaṇas and rājanyas should cooperate to rule over the vaiśyas or the peasantry. Since the peasants paid occasional taxes to the warrior-nobles and made gifts to the brāhmaṇas, in later Vedic texts they are described as barley and the two upper orders are called deer who eat the barley. But sometimes this simile is reversed, apparently to remind the emerging rulers of their responsibilities for distribution. In this period the śūdras appear as a small serving class. They formed the defeated and dispossessed sections of the Āryans and non-Āryans. Some of them could take part in Vedic rituals because they formed part of the tribal society, to which all the three higher varṇas belonged. Social differentiation could not be sharpened in later Vedic times, because on account of their primitive agriculture peasants could not produce much for consumption and accumulation by non-producers. They generally worked with the wooden ploughshare, and their agricultural knowledge was not very advanced. Further, peasants possessed only as much land as could be worked with the help of their family members, and even kings lent their hands to the plough. They did not need slaves and agricultural labourers. We therefore do not hear of slaves, especially men, engaged in agriculture, and do not find any word for wage-earner in Vedic literature.

All told the two crucial social formations, the class and the state, were not well-established in the later Vedic age. Each one of them needed solid material support and universal social recognition. The Vedic communities had neither a regular taxation system nor a regular standing army. We have seen that there did not exist collectors of taxes apart from the kinsmen of the prince, and the difference between tax and the sacrificial offering called *bali* had not been completely blurred. The tribal militia of the pastoral society was replaced by the peasant militia of agricultural society, for without a well-established taxation system it was not possible to maintain a professional army. Although the terms *senā*, *senānī* and *senāpati* are mentioned at several places, there is nothing to show that the kings of the Vedic age kept up a permanent soldiery all the year round. The *viś* was associated with the *senā* or the armed host. Force or *bala* was considered to be identical with the *viś* or the tribal peasantry in later Vedic times, who, as the distant kinsmen of the king, received a share of the booty. The army to protect the *aśvamedha* horse comprised both the kṣatriyas and the

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viś. Armed with bows, quivers and shields, the former acted as military captains and leaders; armed with sticks, the latter constituted the rank and file. For the sake of victory the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, though a text of around 600 BC, advises a chief or a noble to eat from the same vessel with the *viś*, whose help is declared to be indispensable to his success.

The later Vedic society had territorial kingdoms in the sense that the people settled down at a place for 2-3 centuries. But these kingdoms may be viewed as chiefdoms, enjoying control over several tribal chiefs and collecting occasional tributes from them, for instance at the time of the *aśvamedha* sacrifice. The kin-based institutions were still strong, and the peasants were not completely alienated from the princes and priests who differentiated out of the tribal communities. The later Vedic peasant paid to the nobles and warriors who in their turn paid handsomely to the priests; in addition, he also paid sacrificial fee to the priests. Artisans such as smiths, chariotmakers and carpenters mainly served the emerging class of warriors, and may not have been fulltime specialists. The later Vedic peasant did not produce enough to help the rise of towns and traders, a feature which became prominent in the age of the Buddha. His was a small-scale non-monetary peasant society and not a full-fledged class society. It was a peasant society with prominent tribal characteristics. In spite of the priestly stress on the subjection of the peasantry as vaiśyas to the nobles and warriors, the limited availability of agricultural surplus, on account of pre-field, wooden ploughshare-based agriculture and indiscriminate killing of cattle in sacrifices, could not push forward the emerging class differences. On the other hand in consonance with tribal practices princes were expected to extend agriculture and even to lend their hands to the plough so that the gap between the vaiśya and the rājanya was not very wide. If we rely on the epics, princely chiefs such as Janaka and Duryodhana were supposed to perform the ploughing ritual, which was a survival of the chiefly function at the advent of agriculture. Although the nobles and warriors ruled over their peasant kinsmen, their dependence upon peasant militia for fight against enemies and inability to grant land without the consent of the tribal peasantry placed them in a difficult position.

With the beginning of the wide use of iron tools for crafts and cultivation, conditions were created for the transformation of the tribal, pastoral, almost egalitarian Vedic society into a full-fledged agricul-

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tural and class-divided social order in the sixth century BC. Once the forested areas of the middle Gaṅgā basin were cleared with the help of the iron axe, one of the most fertile parts of the world was opened to settlement. With the help of the iron ploughshare and other tools peasants produced a good deal more than what they needed for their subsistence. Tribal chiefs and others who had grabbed large stretches of land needed a good number of slaves and hired labourers; even small peasants needed occasional service in their fields. Peasant production was supplemented by artisanal production which not only provided the peasants with tools, clothing, etc., but also supplied weapons and luxury articles to the princes and priests.

For enjoying the social surplus produced by the peasants, artisans, hired labourers and agricultural slaves the *várṇa* mechanism was devised. According to it members of the three higher varṇas or social orders were distinguished ritually from those of the fourth varṇa. The twice-born were entitled to Vedic studies and investiture with the sacred thread, and the fourth varṇa or śūdras were excluded from it. The latter were meant for serving the higher orders as slaves and hired labourers. Thus the twice-born can be called citizens and the śūdras non-citizens. There also grew distinctions between citizen and citizen. In Greece and Rome citizens were not permitted to soil their hands with manual labour, but in India this applied only to the brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas. This brāhmaṇas were not allowed to take to the plough and manual work. Gradually the contempt of the higher varṇas for manual work reached such limits that they developed hatred for the hands that practised crafts and thus came to look upon certain manual labourers as untouchables. The vaiśyas, although members of the twice-born group, worked as peasants, herdsmen and artisans, and later as traders. What is more important, they were the principal taxpayers on whose taxes and tributes lived the kṣatriyas and brāhmaṇas. The varṇa system authorised the kṣatriya to collect taxes from the peasants and tolls from traders and artisans, which enabled him to pay his priests and employees in cash, for since the fifth century BC metal coins had come into use and become specially common in the first two centuries of the Christian era.

The rate of payment and economic privileges differed according to the varṇa to which a person belonged. Thus a brāhmaṇa was required to pay two per cent interest on loans, a kṣatriya three per cent, a vaiśya four per cent, and a śūdra five per cent. Śūdra guests could be

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fed only if they did some work at the house of the host. These rules laid down in the Dharmaśāstras may not have been observed strictly, but they indicate the norms which were set by society.

Since both priests and warriors lived on the taxes, tributes, tithes and labour supplied by peasants and artisans, there were occasional feuds for the sharing of the social savings, but these conflicts were made up in face of the opposition of the vaiśyas and śūdras. Manu lays down that the vaiśyas and śūdras should not be allowed to deviate from the functions assigned to them, otherwise chaos would befall the world. As a corollary to this it is repeatedly emphasised in ancient texts that kṣatriyas cannot prosper without the support of the brāhmaṇas, and brāhmaṇas cannot prosper without the support of the kṣatriyas. They can thrive and rule the world only if they cooperate with one another.

Around the third century AD the vaiśya-śūdra social formation was afflicted with a deep social crisis. The crisis is clearly reflected in the descriptions of the Kali age in those portions of the Purāṇas which belong to the third and fourth centuries AD. Emphasis on the importance of coercive mechanism (*daṇḍa*) in the *Śānti Parva* and the description of anarchy (*arājaka*) in the epics possibly belong to the same age and point to the same crisis. The Kali age is characterised by *varṇa-saṃkara*, i.e., intermixture of varṇas or social orders, which implies that vaiśyas and śūdras, i.e., peasants, artisans and labourers, either refused to stick to the producing functions assigned to them or else the vaiśya peasants declined to pay taxes and the śūdras refused to make their labour available. This made the functioning of the state and society difficult.

In order to meet the situation the practice of the grant of revenues or land grants in lieu of services rendered to the state was adopted by the rulers on a very wide scale. Priests and officials were granted land revenues which relieved the state of the botheration of tax collection and eventually also of the maintenance of law and order in a good part of the kingdom. The practice was extended to both settled and backward areas. In the backward and aboriginal areas the grants to brāhmaṇas and others led to the spread of iron-plough agriculture, preservation of cattle, spread of agricultural calendar, diffusion of the knowledge of *āyurveda* medicine and thus increased the overall agricultural production. In the process the grants brought to the brāhmaṇical fold a large number of aboriginal peasants who came to be ranked

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as śūdras. Śūdras therefore began to be called peasants and agriculturists in early medieval texts. On the other hand land grants depreciated the position of independent vaiśya peasants. Hence vaiśyas and śūdras came closer to one another from Gupta times onwards socially and economically.

Since both the vaiśyas and śūdras were called peasants, there was not much difference between them. Various domestic rituals or *saṃskāras*, religious vows called *vratas* and visits to places of pilgrimage (*tīrthas*) came to be prescribed for the śūdras so that ordinary brāhmaṇas and even priests of a lower category could get their dues on every occasion. The śūdras could also listen to the recitation of the epics and the Purāṇas.

The castes proliferated at a fast rate in Gupta and post-Gupta times. This was because of land grants in tribal areas. Every tribe was annexed to the Hindu system as a śūdra caste. We find 61 castes mentioned in a late chapter of Manu, and more than 100 castes in the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa*. Mostly these were tribal peoples converted into castes. But the brāhmaṇical law-givers explained their origins as a result of mixture between the varṇas and called them mixed castes or *varaṇasamkara*. Similarly the tribal chiefs and some foreign rulers were absorbed as second class kṣatṛiyas in brāhmaṇical society, and in the post-Gupta period, they came to be known as Rajputs. Different tribes contributed different types of Rajputs.

In Gupta and post-Gupta times grants of land were linked with the decline of trade and commerce and that of towns. This gave rise to a new economy in which local needs were satisfied locally. Artisans and traders lost mobility. Occupations became hereditary and came to be converted into artisanal castes. Every locality came to value its laws and customs, and because of lack of mobility the caste system became more rigid in matters of food and marriage. Thus class differentiation assumed more and more the form of social stratification.

The most significant result of land grants was the emergence of a class of landlords, living on the produce of the peasants. And there emerged in about the 4th-6th centuries AD what we would like to call a feudal formation. For more than three centuries this formation was characterised by lesser trade, decline of towns and the resultant lack of social and spatial mobility except in the case of princes, priests and warriors. Consequently it created favourable conditions for the growth of the *jāti* system or the caste system, which came to be

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based on hereditary occupation, marriage within the caste, and restrictions on interdining and long-distance journeys.

The new socio-economic formation was marked by a sharp differentiation between the peasants and the landlords, and can be regarded as feudal. The four main developments that took place in Gupta and post-Gupta times are typical of a feudal formation. First, in a feudal society there is a basic class of landlords who claim and collect rent from the peasants on the ground that they are the owners of the land. This class was created in India as a result of land charters. Second, a feudal society is primarily based on a class of subject peasantry, who are in actual occupation of the land but are compelled to pay rents in cash, kind or labour to the landlords. This situation developed in the country partly as a consequence of land grants and partly through the growing power of the local officials. Third, the rents and labour services are collected by the landlords not with the object of promoting production or the economic growth of the country but for their own consumption, which in many cases is conspicuous and ostentatious. For collecting rents from the peasants religious and ideological propaganda proving the low status of the producing classes is used; the digests provide a good example of this practice. Legally the landlords claim the rents and services from the peasants on the basis of the land characters granted to them by the state. If legal and religious methods are found inadequate to collect the surplus produce from the peasants, force is also used by the landlords. These extra-economic methods were not wanting in early medival India. Fourth, a feudal socio-economic formation originates and grows in a predominantly agricultural economy in which local needs are satisfied locally and in which there is little scope for the functioning of the market system. Naturally in such an economy salaries are not paid in cash but in kind, and all kinds of services such as religious, military, political, administrative, etc., are remunerated through grant of plots of land in the case of lower functionaries and through grants of revenues from villages in the case of higher functionaries. As a result of continuous land grants these four features of feudalism appeared in Gupta times and became prominent in the post-Gupta period. Socially this development was accompanied by the proliferation of castes arranged in terms of hierarchy and impurity.

We may now mark the main stages in the evolution of early Indian society and in class differentiation. The society as reflected in the

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kernel of the *Ṛgveda* was a tribal, semi-nomadic and postoral formation which hardly produced any surplus. Some chiefs and their bards or priests may have possessed more cattle in comparison with their tribesmen, but they did not enjoy any social privilege. Booty captured as a result of intra-or inter-tribal wars was divided unequally in the tribal assemblies. The later Vedic society marked the beginning of transition to class society and state formation because of the beginning of agriculture on a large scale. Attempts were made by priests and warriors to bring the common people or tribesmen under control, and some privileges were claimed by them. But it was really in post-Vedic times, in the age of the Buddha, that the vaṛṇa-divided and state-based society, founded on the iron-ploughshare agriculture, was established firmly. Agricultural production was regulated by the varṇa mechanism through which surplus in the form of gifts and taxes was collected and distributed; besides, petty commodity production by artisans brought money to the king for paying officials in cash. Resting on the producing activities of the vaiśyas and śūdras this social order worked well from about the sixth country BC to about the third century AD. Then it was upset by a crisis which compelled the rulers to pay priests and officials through land grants. This process created a class of landlords, and elevated slaves, hired labourers, aboriginal peasantry into fullfledged peasants who were mainly ranked as śūdras. Fiscal, military, administrative and religious services came to be linked to land grants which gave rise to a feudal formation. This formation created a sharp distinction between the landlords and the peasants, and reinforced the privileges of the princes and priests by giving them considerable control over the factors of production including land.

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CHAPTER III

Traces of Promiscuity in Ancient Texts

THE German scholar Bachofen, who produced his epoch-making work *Mutterrecht* in 1861, was the first to suggest that a state of promiscuity preceded the establishment of the institution of marriage.[1] His conclusion were reinforced by the researches of Mclennan, Morgan, Lubbock, Bastian, Spencer, and others but disputed by Darwin and Westermark, who pointed out that the institution of marriage existed right from the commencement of the human race.

Recently Morgan's reasons regarding the prevalence of exogamy and prohibition of incest have been questioned. He attributed this development to the biological factor of natural selection, but new anthropologists argue that by renouncing their rights to mothers, sisters, daughters, etc., men of one group or lineage make these women available for other groups or lineages and thus acquire rights over women of other groups.[2] The incest prohibition not only forbids but also ordains,[3] and is, in our opinion, in consonance with the view that marriage is an exchange of women and that kinship relations are primarily relations between groups rather than relations between individuals.[4] However, it is widely recognised that marriage relations between close kins persisted for long in 'some primitive societies and countless village communities."[5]

Bachofen traced many passages in the classical literature of various countries testifying to the existence of promiscuity. It is, however, not sufficiently known that a number of such passages is found also in ancient Indian literature. According to Meyer the Vedic literature knows directly nothing of promiscuity.[6] But there seems to be no doubt about the indirect evidence for the prevalence of this social

[1]F. Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (Calcutta, 1943), 4.

[2]Maurice Godelier, *Perspectives in Marxist Anthropology* (Cambridge, 1977), 104. [3]ibid.

[4]These ideas have been advanced by Lévi-Strauss, ibid., 48. [5]ibid., 104.

[6]J. Jolly, *Hindu Law and Custom* (Calcutta, 1928), 106 fn. 2. S.D. Singh

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phenomenon. There is the well-known myth that Prajāpati was enamoured of his daughter. We also learn that Puṣan wooed his mother. An old *gāthā* in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* states that for the sake of sons men united with their mother and sister as with wife.

This is corroborated by some traditions in the epics and Purāṇas, which refer to the practice of parental incest. We can quote the famous example of Manu, the father of mankind, who was begotten by Brahmā on his daughter Śatarūpā.[1] Such instances obviously point to a stage in early society in which the institution of marriage was not established and the inhibitions regarding sexual intercourse between father and daughter or brother and sister had not arisen. It will be shown later how Śvetaketu speaks of a period when there was no marriage. But the view that 'In the Vedas there is nothing that can even faintly suggest that any such condition of society, as is disclosed in the Legend of Śvetaketu, existed among the Āryans'[2] seems to be without foundation. It has been suggested that the practice of parental incest arose in primitive patriarchal groups on account of the necessity of having sons in the course of their migration. But many primitive communities were generally matriarchal or at least matrilineal, and such features were foreign to the patriarchal societies of known historical times. Several passages in the *Mahābhārata* clearly indicate that the stage of promiscuity prevailed in the earlier period. The *Karṇa Parva* records several such traditions about the people of Madra country. It is stated that in that region women of Bāhlika are a blemish on mankind.[3] In their case it is not possible to determine the birth, and hence sisters, and not sons, are the heirs. The same source further states that Bāhlika women of Śākala, in the country of Madra, dance and laugh naked. They are licentious and self-willed, and indulge in sexual intercourse in the open.[4] The echo of such a tradition about North-Western India persisted till the time of *Rājatarangiṇī*, which states that the brāhmaṇas of Gāndhāra lived in incest.[5] The references about Madra suggest that the restriction on

holds that metronymics including the Ṛgvedic example of Māmateya may point to polyandry, polygyny or promiscuity, *Polyandry in Ancient India* (Delhi, 1978), 68.

[1]For example see S.C. Sarkar, *Some Aspects of the Earliest Social History of India* (Oxford, 1928).

[2]D.N. Mitter, *Position of Women in Hindu Law*, 200.

[3]*Karṇa Parva* (Kumbkonam ed.), 37. 23. [4]ibid., 37, 22-23. [5]*Rāj.*, I, 308.

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sexual intercourse, which the institution of monogamous marriage involves, was absent in thát country. Such traditions about Madra and Bāhlika are confirmed by other references to the existence of *strīrājya*, *strivāhya* or *nārīviṣaya* in North-Western India.[1]

On the question of promiscuity two statements in the *Mahābhārata* are decisive. Pāṇḍu refers to an age in which women were uncontrolled, licentious, self-willed, and independent. They were attracted towards men even before their marriage, but this did not involve any sin to them.[2] Pāṇḍu informs us that even in his time such a practice prevailed in Uttarakuru. We may add that the Buddhist literature refers to this land as a place where women are no chattel, and where there is no private property.[3] But the most important indication of the existence of promiscuous sexual relations is to be found in the story of Uddālaka and his son Śvetaketu. While Śvetaketu was standing by, a brāhmaṇa snatched away his mother by hand, which enraged him very much. The father told him that there was no point in getting furious because all the women in the world were uncovered and self-willed, and that this had been the practice from time immemorial (*sanātana dharma*).[4] But the son was not prepared to accept this explanation for such a behaviour. He established the rule that the wife who neglects her husband and the husband who violates the unmarried girl shall be guilty of destroying the embryo. It will be seen that the legend of Śvetaketu is in keeping with numerous other traditions, and hence it cannot be dismissed as a fiction.[5] Reference may be also made to the Purāṇic statement that in the Kṛta age progeny was produced mainly on account of the desire to produce.[6] Perhaps the myth suggests that due to the absence of the institution of marriage in the earliest times men and women could mate freely.

An ancient *gāthā* quoted in the earlier Dharmasūtras contains a veiled allusion to a period when little value was placed on the conjugal faith of a woman.[7] According to the *Bṛhaspati Smṛti* the women of the east are unchaste.[8] Jolly suggests that this unfavourable opinion

[1] *Vātsyayana's Kāmasūtra* (Nirṇayasāgara ed.) 301 ff. 129; *Śānti Parva*, IV, 7; *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*, XIX, 22; *Rājataraṅgiṇī* (Calcutta, 1835), IV. 173-76, 670.

[2] *Ādi Parva*, 128. 4-5.

[3] *Dīgha Nikāya* (Rhys Davids' tr.), Part III, p. 192.

[4] *Ādi Parva* (Kumbkonam ed.), 128. 9-15.

[5] D.N. Mitter, op. cit., p. 203.

[6] *Vāyu Purāṇa* (*Bibliotheca Indica*), VII. 57.

[7] *Āpastamba*, II. 13. 7; *Baudh.*, II. 3.34. [8] II. 30.

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about the fidelity of the women of eastern countries is perhaps derived from the old accounts of Tibetan and Farther Indian tribes, among whom even now the married life is very lax.[1]

Even after the establishment of the institution of marriage, some practices, reminding of the old stage of promiscuity, lingered till the time of the Smṛtis, with the result that the lawgivers had to make provision for sons born of intercourse beyond the recognized married connections. According to Manu, if children are born of women as a result of intercourse with a person other than her husband, and if their father cannot be determined, they would be known as *gūḍhotpanna*.[2] The lawgivers also provide for children born out of unmarried and widowed women. Four kinds of such children are enumerated in the law-books. Such survivals seem to recall the old promiscuous relations which imposed no restrictions on the intercourse between men and women, which developed as a result of monogamous family system in patriarchal society.

On the basis of these references it is difficult to come to any definite conclusion regarding the extent and period of the prevalence of promiscuous relations. We cannot clearly determine whether this practice was confined to the Āryans or non-Āryans, or to both.[3] But the fact that Madra is singled out for condemnation may suggest that the people of the Punjab were not able to shed away this practice for a long time. In any case the literary references leave little doubt that there were traces of promiscuity in ancient Indian society.[4]

[1]Jolly, op. cit., 107.

[2]*Manu*, IX. 170-81.

[3]S.D. Singh has collected an impressive body of textual evidence to establish that polyandry prevailed among the non-Āryan, Āryan, Vedic and also among Indo-European peoples. *Polyandry in Ancient India*, chs. II, III and pp. 166-76.

[4]In the *Mahābhārata*, Singh notices 'repeated references to sexual unregulation among all classes of men, in which even the gods participate.' ibid., 76-82. The commentator Nīlakaṇṭha describes the *gaṇa* of Utsavasaṃketa as a republic of seven promiscuous tribes with no fixed laws of marriage. This *gaṇa* was conquered by Arjuna (*Mbh.*, II. 24.15). ibid., 82 and fn. 1 on the same page.

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CHAPTER IV

Co-references to Woman and Property in the Epics and Purāṇas

THE one single theme running through joint references to woman and property in the epics and Purāṇas is the necessity of protecting both. Since this was regarded as an important duty of the king, a prince boasts that he never coveted other men's wives or wealth or anything belonging to them.[1] According to the epics probably the justification of kingship was that only through its existence were family and property made secure, a thing which was not possible in a kingless state. The *Rāmāyaṇa* observes that in a kingless state private property cannot be retained and a wife is not under control.[2] This is reproduced more or less literally by the *Śānti Parva*, which states that in a kingless state property, son, or wife cannot be safe;[3] in other words the institutions of family and private property are not secure. That it was one of the important obligations of the civil authority to protect woman and private property is made abundantly clear by the *Mahābhārata*. It is stated there that when the people made a contract to set up civil society, one of the important terms of the agreement was that they should abandon the person who encroaches on another's property and who violates the chastity of another's wife.[4] We further learn that when Manu was offered kingship he accepted it only on the condition that the people should give him a woman and property. It seems impliedly suggested that only their possession would give him a vital interest in the protection of the state and society where everybody had his own woman and property. The people entered into a contract by which they agreed to give him one-fiftieth of the cows, one-fiftieth of gold, one-tenth of the foodgrains, and the most beautiful maiden in marriage.[5] In return they asked for the destruction of their enemies so that they might lead quiet lives. These epic references clearly indicate

[1] *kṛtā spṛhā ca na mayā parastrīvibhavādiṣu. Mārk. P.*, 13.13.
[2] *arājake dhanaṃ nāsti nāsti bhāryāpyarājake. Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa*, 67.11.
[3] *Śānti Parva*, 68.15-16.
[4] ibid., 68.18-19. [5] ibid., 23-24.

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that a primary reason assigned for the origin of the state in ancient India was the necessity of protecting woman and property. One Purāṇic allusion shows that on certain occasions the king could give away his gold, money, son, wife, body, life, kingdom, city, and good fortune. Thus when king Hariścandra incurred the wrath of Viśvāmitra, in order to appease him he was prepared to give away everything, including his son, wife, life, kingdom, and good fortune.[1]

Several references show that the question of woman and property continued to agitate the minds of men all through the early period, and it was thought to be at the root of all conflicts in society. The *Brahmavaivarata Purāṇa*, a work of early medieval times, observes that virtuous men never interfere with the wives or properties of others, the source of all trouble.[2] Similar views are expressed in the *Agni Purāṇa*, a text of about the eleventh century, which states that the usurpation of kingdom, wife, place, country, knowledge, and power is the source of all trouble.[3] However, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, an earlier text, leaves out woman in this connection and says that money, land, and gold is the cause of all conflicts.

To eliminate this source of conflict and to maintain social harmony a number of moral aphorisms in the Purāṇas emphasize the necessity of leaving other's property and women unmolested. It is stated that on no account should one use another's property or take another's wife.[4] Again, the really wise man is he who looks upon another's wife as mother and the latter's goods as brickbats, and regards other beings as susceptible to pain and pleasure as himself.[5] Further, money should be saved for the time of distress, and a wife should be saved even at the sacrifice of the stored treasure. Furthermore, a man should defend his own self even at the cost of his wealth and wife.[6] A prayer is made to Janārdana that he should keep the mind of the devotee away from the property and wife of others.[7]

Universal condemnation is the fate of those who covet the wife and property of others. According to the *Garuḍa Purāṇa*, a work of about the twelfth century to eat another man's bread, to depend on another man's purse, to lie in another's bed and with another's wife,

[1] *Mārk. P.*, 7.24. [2] *Kṛṣṇajanma Kāṇḍa*, 35.77-86.
[3] *rājyastrīsthānadeśānāṃ jñānasya ca balasya ca,*
apahāro mado mānaḥ pīḍā vaiṣayikī tathā. 239. 10-18.
[4] *Garuḍa P.*, 108.13. [5] ibid., 111.12.
[6] *. . . . ātmānaṃ satataṃ rakṣeddārairrapi dhanairapi*. ibid., 109.1.
[7] *. . . . paradravyānmanorakṣa paradārājjanārdana. Harivaṃśa P.*, 89.79.

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and to lodge in another's house are iniquities which may send even an Indra to go abegging in the world.[1] The same Purāṇa states: 'Where is sleep for the poor, for the person attached to other's wife for even of the rich man's slave and for the man stealing the property of others.'[2] According to another view, paying court to another man's wife and perfidy in taking other people's property should be regarded as the after-characteristics of those who are released from hell.[3] The same idea is repeated literally in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, which states that when vile, covetous men gaze on others' wives and on others' goods with evil eye and evil minds, the birds with adamant beaks tear out their eyes.[4]

It appears that moral maxims and castigations prohibiting the possession of others' wife and property were backed by religious sanctions. In the case of a breach of these prohibitions, expiations were provided; these constituted a sort of punishment for the guilty people. According to the *Agni Purāṇa*, if a person takes wrongful possession of a man, woman, field, house, tank, or well, his sin can be atoned by performing the *cāndrāyaṇa vrata*.[5] The sin of coveting others' wives or property could also be removed by hearing or reading the Purāṇas.[6] It was stated that if the mind of a person is tempted towards the wife and property of others, the expiation is prayer.[7] At another place it is said that the person who breaks a field or bridge, or violates the chastity of anothers' wife goes to the Vaitaraṇī hell.[8]

The *Gautama Dharmasūtra*, mainly a pre-Maurya text, cautions those who enjoy the blessings of wife and property as a matter of course. According to it too much enjoyment of animal, land, and woman is not proper.[9] Probably the prevailing tendency to hanker after woman and property led to some reaction towards equalisation and human activities were diverted towards stability and spiritual attainment. Thus the *Mahābhārata* declares that property and woman, even if they are pursued by the accomplished, will never be steady

[1] *parānnañca parasvañca paraśayyāḥ parastriyaḥ, paraveśmani vāsañca śakrādapi śriyaṃ haret, Garūḍa P.*, 115.5.
[2] ibid., 115.68. [3] *Mārk. P.*, 15.40-42. [4] ibid., 14.39.
[5] *manuṣyāṇāntu haraṇe strīṇāṃ kṣetragṛhasya ca,*
vāpīkūpataḍāgānāṃ śuddhiścāndrāyaṇaṃ smṛtam. Agni P., 173.44.
[6] *Mārk. P.*, 137.5. [7] *Agni P.*, 172.9.
[8] *kṣetrasetuvibhedī ca paradārapradharṣakaḥ . . . Garūḍa P.* (Uttara Khaṇḍa), 35.18.
[9] *paśubhūmistrīṇāmanatibhogaḥ.* XII. 36.

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and faithful, howsoever assiduously one may work for them.[1] Since woman and property were considered to be the strongest bonds of attachment to the world, according to the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa*, an ideal votary was one who devoted himself to the god after giving up his sons, wives, estate, and wealth.[2]

There are some instances in which woman is bracketed with animal, which further illustrates the tendency of mentioning woman and property jointly. According to the *Agni Purāṇa* woman and animal can be kept as pledge, and interest on them is the seventieth part of their original value. Very probably this is monthly interest.[3] Another law ordains that the person who places his own children, wife, animals, and paddy as deposits is entitled to get twice the value of the original.[4]

Possession of wife and property seems to be one of the paramount objects in the life of the people. According to the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* those who do not acquire learning during childhood and are without property and wife in youth are deplorable, and move in this world as deer in the form of human beings.[5] Even a son is regarded as an enemy because he is a menace to the wife and property of his father. As soon as he is born he monopolizes all the attention of his mother; and when he grows up he usurps his father's estate.[6] The relative importance of woman and property is indicated by saying that the former is meant for bearing sons and the latter for being given away and enjoyed.[7] Provided they were of high quality there was no bar to accepting wife and wealth from any quarter whatsoever. Thus it was said that gold could be taken from a person of impure descent, and a good and virtuous wife even from a low family.[8] However, a reference which mentions both woman and property attaches greater value to property than woman. It points out that if the person possesses no property his wife deserts him.[9]

[1] *arthāḥ striyaśca nipuṇairapi sevyamānā naivāptaprabhāvamupayanti na ca sthiratvam.* 1.2.392.

[2] *Kṛṣṇajanma Kāṇḍa*, 25.11.

[3] *saptatistu paśustrīṇāṃ rasyāṣṭaguṇāparā . . . . Agni P.*, 253.63-64.

[4] *svasantatistrīpaśavyaṃ dhānyaṃ dviguṇameva ca.* ibid., 254. 16-17; cf. *Yāj.*, II. 57.

[5] *Garūḍa P.*, 109-48.

[6] ibid., 114.60. [7] ibid., 110.4.

[8] *. . . . amedhyāt kāñcanaṃ grāhyaṃ strīratna duṣkulādapi.* ibid., 110.7-8.

[9] *Agni P.*, 227.7.

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Prayers made to gods indicate the desire of the devotees to have more of property and woman. For example they conceive of the trees which bear fruits in the form of accomplished women and precious jewels.[1] At one place god Viṣṇu says to Arjuna that if people would worship him with perfumes, garlands, strong drinks, etc., he shall give them supreme gratification in matters of children, wives, wealth, and other blessings.[2] At another place the gods pray to Caṇḍikā that whatever mortals praise her with the prescribed hymns, she should make them prosper in wealth, wife, and other kinds of blessings.[3]

In drawing conclusions from these references, two things are obvious. First, the institutions of private property and family centring round the wife were not only held to be the chief reasons of the origin of the state, but also looked upon as the main motives for social action. Secondly, since woman and property are bracketed together in several references, there is no doubt that woman herself was regarded as a sort of property. She was considered incapable of exercising her independent will, and could be given away or loaned as any item of property. This was like the attitude of a typical patriarchal society based on private property. Because of this attitude the brāhmaṇical law did not allow any proprietory rights to women; the provision for *strīdhana* is of a very limited character and does not extend beyond the wife's rights to jewels, ornaments, and presents made to her.

The sort of social philosophy reflected in the above-mentioned references took strong roots in Gupta times, although the institutions of monogamous family and private property had been developed much earlier. Though we have prayers for obtaining progeny (*prajā*) and animals (*paśu*) in the Vedic literature, woman and property are not clearly put there in the same category. This tendency became remarkably strong in the Gupta period, when the contemporary law-books lay down the earliest provisions for the partition of landed property. And since women had to be kept out of receiving shares they come to be treated as chattel. The chief reason for emphasis on the protection of property, family and the varṇa system in Gupta and post-Gupta times may be sought in the evils of the Kali age depicted in several Purāṇic passages belonging to the third and early fourth centuries AD. These passages show that property, family and the varṇa system, valued more by the upper classes, were under

[1] *Harivaṃśa P.*, 86.56. [2] *Mārk. P.*, 19.12. [3] ibid., 84.32.

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heavy attack. Therefore *daṇḍa* or coercion was declared to be indispensable, the maxims to protect, property, family and the varṇas were vigorously propagated, and land was widely granted to priests and others who served the state.[1]

[1]R.S. Sharma, 'The Kali Age: A Period of Social Crisis', *A.L. Basham Felicitation Volume* (forthcoming)

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CHAPTER V

Co-references to Woman and Śūdra in Early Literature

It is striking that in many passages from the ancient Indian texts woman and śūdra are lumped together in the same category. Such joint notices are to be found in the early literature such as the Brāhmaṇas as well as in the later literature such as the Smṛtis and Purāṇas, some of which continued to be compiled till the twelfth century AD. They may be conveniently considered under several heads—civic, social, religious, cultural, and economic.

As regards civic rights, some authorities attach the same value to the life of the woman and śūdra. The law-book of Parāśara, compiled in about the eighth century AD, ordains that the person who kills an artisan, mechanic, śūdra, or a woman shall perform the *prājāpatya* twice and give eleven bulls as gift.[1] Hence the same penance and fine were provided for redeeming the sin of killing a śūdra or a woman. This is corroborated by the *Agni Purāṇa*, a work of about the eleventh century AD, which states that one who commits the murder of a woman shall be required to perform the same kind of penance as is prescribed for the murder of a śūdra.[2]

References to the similar social position of the woman and śūdra appear in post-Maurya and Gupta texts. In the *Bhagvadgītā* they along with the vaiśya are relegated to a low status. As Kṛṣṇa says, 'For, finding refuge in Me, they also who, son of Pṛthu, may be of a sinful birth—woman, vaiśyas, as well as śūdras—even that attain to the supreme goal'.[3] Thus although equal treatment is assured to the vaiśyas, women, and śūdras in the next world, there is no doubt that the prevalent social attitude is one of contempt towards them. They

[1] *śilpinaṃ kārūkaṃ śūdraṃ striyaṃ vā yastu ghātayet,*
prājāpatyaṃ dvayaṃ kṛtvā vṛṣaikādaśa dakṣiṇā. VI. 16.

[2] ed. Panchanana Tarkaratna (Calcutta, Sāl 1314), *apraduṣṭāṃ strīyaṃ hatvā śūdrahatyāvrataṃ caret.* 173.13.

[3] *māṃ hi pārtha vyāpāśritya ye'pi syuḥ pāpayoniyaḥ, striyo vaiśyāstathā śudrāste'pi yānti parāṃ gatiṃ.* IX. 32.

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are regarded as persons of sinful birth.

Women and śūdras were held in derision by several authors of the Dharmaśāstras and Purāṇas. Socially they were regarded as the most impure classes of people. Varying degrees of purity were associated with the different social classes. Here Manu discriminates between the twice-born on the one hand, and the woman and śūdra on the other. According to his law the former can obtain bodily purity by sipping water three times, the latter can obtain it by sipping it only once.[1] The *Kūrma Purāṇa*, a text of early mediaeval times, prescribes four grades of purity. The brāhmaṇa is purified if the water reaches his breast, the kṣatriya if it reaches his throat, the vaiśya if he tastes it, and the woman and śūdra if they simply touch it.[2] As regards food, it was thought to be sinful to eat the leavings of the woman and śūdra, and in case this prohibitary rule was transgressed the sin could be expiated by drinking barley for seven days.[3] It looks as if the woman and śūdra were incapable of doing anything good. It was laid down that even if woman or a man of low caste (i.e. śūdra) does anything good, the student should diligently practise it.[4]

Allusions to the similar religious position of the woman and śūdra seem to be as old as the later Vedic period. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* warns that while teaching *pravarjyā* the teacher should not look at the woman, the śūdra, the dog, and the blackbird, because they are untruth.[5] The same provision recurs in the *Pāraskara Gṛhyasūtra*. According to it after the Samāvartana ceremony one should avoid seeing women, śūdras, dead bodies, blackbirds, and dogs, and also one should not talk to such beings.[6] A similar regulation is found in the *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra*, which states that in performing rites for success the student should not talk to a woman and śūdra.[7] Manu also lays down that during the period of the *cāndrāyaṇa* vow it is not proper on any account to talk to a woman, a śūdra, and an outcaste.[8] He does not approve of the conduct of the snātaka who tries to hide his sin under the pretext of a vow and who deceives women and śūdras due to their ignorance[9]. The *Brahma Purāṇa*, a work of the Gupta

[1]. . . . *śārīraṃ śaucamicchanhi strī śūdrastu sakṛtsakṛt*. V. 139.
[2]Calcutta, 1898 . . . . *strīśūdro sparśata'mbhasaḥ*. 530. [3]*Manu*, XI. 153.
[4]. . . . *yadi strī yadyavarajaḥ śreyaḥ kiñcit samācaret*. ibid., II. 223.
[5]. . . . *strī śūdraḥ śva kṛṣṇaḥ śakunistāni na prekṣet*. XIV. 1.1.31.
[6]II.8.3. [7]. . . . *strīśūdrairnā' bhibhāṣet brahmacārī havirvrataḥ*. IV. 5.4.
[8]*Manu*, XI. 224. [9]ibid., IV. 198.

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period, declares that members of the first three varṇas should perform the ceremonies of bathing and muttering of prayers according to the Vedic methods, but women and śūdras cannot perform these ceremonies accordingly.[1] By the laws of the Brāhmaṇas the woman, the śūdra, and the people of lower classes are deprived of the right to perform fire sacrifice; they can perform other ceremonies without *mantras*.[2]

There are also several references to a similar cultural position of women and śūdras, and the earliest of these may belong to pre-Maurya times. According to the *Śāṅkhāyana Gṛhyasūtra* it was not permissible to recite the Veda in the neighbourhood of a śūdra or a woman that had her courses.[3] Obviously this rule does not apply to all classes of women, but it does place some of them in the category of śūdras. According to Āpastamba the śūdra and woman could have access to at least one kind of knowledge, which was a supplement of the *Atharvaveda*,[4] generally regarded as a non-Āryan work. In Gupta and post-Gupta times women and śūdras were conceded at least the right to acquire the knowledge of the Purāṇas. But even in subsequent times it was not permissible to study the Veda near the woman and śūdra.

The tradition of bracketting the woman and śūdra was so strongly rooted that it appears even in a book on astrology. Thus the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*, a work of about the sixth century AD, declares that the eclipse which takes place as a result of the sun and the moon having risen one-sixth brings calamity to the woman and śūdra.[5]

The references given above can be supplemented by others from Sanskrit dramas, in which women and śūdras are represented as speaking in a tongue which is not refined.

The joint statements about the woman and śūdra reveal a state of society whose true character has generally escaped our notice. On their basis the conclusion has to be faced that women and śūdras constituted the most condemned sections of society. Judged from modern democratic standards it would be something shocking. But this seems

[1] . . . . *strīśūdrayoḥ snānajāpyaṃ vedoktavidhivarjitam*. 67.19.
[2] *Brahma P.*, 572.
[3] IV.47.
[4] *tasya vedasya śeṣoyaṃ yā vidyā strīṣu*
śūdreṣu cetyupadiśanti dharmajñāḥ. II. 11.29. 11-12.
[5] Lucknow: Nawalkishore Press, 1884 . . . *strīśūdrān ṣaṣṭāṃśedasyu pratyantahāstamayākāle*, V. 28.31.

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to be a common feature of the ancient class-divided societies, which were generally based on the domination of man over woman and of priests and warriors over the small traders and the producing masses. In such a society women and the labouring masses were placed in the same position. This applies not only to ancient India, but also to ancient Rome, whose property law was in some ways similar to that of India. Manu declares that the wife, the son and the slave—these are unpropertied; whatever they earn is the property of those to whom they belong.[1] According to this provision the head of the family enjoyed complete right over his wife and slave who generally belonged to the śūdra class. Manu ordains that the śūdras must be reduced to slavery either by purchase or without purchase because they are created by God for the sake of serving others.[2] This ancient Indian law which provides for the unfettered right of the family head over his wife, son, and slave finds its exact counterpart in the Roman law. According to it the children, the wife, and the slaves of a Roman head of a house (*paterfamilias*) were equally subject to his unrestricted power (*vitae necisque potestas*) and equally outside the jurisdiction of the state.[3] And therefore in both Rome and India under the paternal class power the position of the wife and slave was identical.[4]

It may be hasty to draw inferences from these joint notices of women and śūdras, but even some separate notices point to their analogous position. In the law-books women and śūdras are represented as lifelong slaves from birth to death. Manu and Yājñavalkya hold that a woman is never independent. While unmarried the father protects her, when married the husband protects her, and in the old age the son protects her. If there are no family members to protect her,[5] she should always be kept under the surveillance of man.[6] What is true of the woman is also true of the śūdra. According to Manu a śūdra even when releascd from slavery is not emancipated because slavery is inborn in him.[7] Since the woman and śūdra were condemned to a lifelong status of slavery it was only natural that they should be mentioned jointly at many places in ancient Indian literature.

[1] *Manu*, VIII. 416. [2] ibid., VIII. 413.
[3] William A. Hunter, *Introduction to Roman Law* (London, 1934), 24.
[4] ibid., p. 36. [5] *Manu*, IX. 3; *Yāj.*, I. 85.
[6] *asvatantrāḥ striyaḥ kāryāḥ puruṣaiḥ svairdivāniśaṃ. Manu*, IX. 2.
[7] *na svāminā nisṛṣṭo'pi śūdro dāsyādvimucyate, nisargajaṃ hi tattasya kastasmāttadapohati.* ibid., VIII. 414.

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CHAPTER VI

Varṇa* Influence on Marriage Forms and Practices

ACCORDING to the Dharmaśāstras one of the requisites for a valid marriage was that both the bride and the bridegroom should belong to the same caste.[1] How far this formality was observed has been a subject of much study. It is, however, not sufficiently known that considerations of caste influenced the various forms and institutions of marriage, i.e. approved and unapproved forms, the practice of divorce, widow remarriage and *niyoga*, polygamy and monogamy. It is also not well understood that the brāhmaṇical permission for intercaste unions was, in practice, limited to the two higher varṇas, and the lawgivers developed an elaborate mechanism of subcastes to find some place for the progeny of such unions in the fourfold varṇa system.

Of the four unapproved forms of marriage the *āsura vivāha*, in which the bridegroom has to pay the price of the bride, is the same as marriage by purchase, which is regarded by Westermark as of universal character in ancient times.[2] But it is condemned by the Dharmaśāstras in strong terms, probably on account of its connection with the lower varṇas. Commenting on a passage of the *Āśvalāyana Gṛhya-sūtra* Nārāyaṇa states that because of its association with wealth the *āsura* form of marriage is prescribed for the vaiśyas.[3] Being a later text its value cannot be as great as that of the *Baudhāyana Dharma-sūtra*, which states that the *āsura* and the *paiśāca* forms of marriage are meant for the vaiśyas and the śūdras.[4] Similarly Manu quotes the opinion of a sage that the *āsura* form of marriage is permissible for

*Caste has been used in this chapter as a popular translation of varṇa.

[1] *Manu*, X. 5; cf. *Nar.* (SBE), XII. 4.

[2] *History of Marriage* (London, 1926), p. 166-71.

[3] Anandasrama Sanskrit Series, I. 6.

[4] *pañcamaṣṭamau vaiśyaśūdrāṇāṃ*. *Baudh.* (Hultzsch's ed.), I. 20. 13 and 14.

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the vaiśyas and the śūdras[1]—a dictum which is also repeated in the *Ādi Parva*.[2] But in Manu's opinion even the śūdra should avoid marriage by purchase.[3] The *paiśāca* form, which is described by the brāhmaṇical law-books as a marriage in a state of intoxication, carelessness, or sleep and therefore the basest of all marriages,[4] is prescribed by Baudhāyana for the vaiśyas and the śūdras.[5] This is also corroborated by Manu, who not only recommends the *āsura* and *paiśāca* forms of marriage for the vaiśyas and the śūdras but also permits them for the kṣatriyas.[6] Thus the two forms of marriages, the *āsura* in which the importance of woman is indicated by the price paid for her and the *paiśāca* which appears like a remnant of a state of promiscuity, are generally recommended for the vaiśyas and the śūdras. Most probably these measures were intended to validate the marriage practices of those tribes who were absorbed as two lower varṇas in ancient society. Obviously such regulations could not have been laid down without some basis in fact.

The two other unapproved forms of marriage, *rākṣasa* and *gāndharva*, are not confined to the two lower castes. The first, which according to the Dharmaśāstras is marriage by capture, is prescribed by Manu for the kṣatriya,[7] but the *Ādi Parva* considers this not only specially suitable for the kṣatriya but also permissible for the brāhmaṇas.[8] Duryodhana, Arjuna, and Bhīṣma are credited with the performance of the *kṣātra* (identical with the *rākṣasa*) form of marriage, but by the third century BC it ceased to be approved even by enlightened kṣatriyas.[9] Probably the *rākṣasa* form of marriage was a survival of the tribal stage,[10] and it ceased to be respectable with the kṣatriyas as a result of the stabilization of the class society and the consequent transformation of the rude fighters into the luxurious rulers of later times. It cannot be said whether it was practised by the two lower varṇas although its nature precludes that possibility.

[1] *āsuraṃ vaiśyaśūdrayoḥ*. *Manu*, III. 24.
[2] Critical ed., 67.11. [3] *Manu*, IX. 98.
[4] ibid., III. 34. [5] I. 20.13 and 14. [6] III. 23.
[7] *rākṣasaṃ kṣatriyasyaikam* . . . . *Manu*, III. 24; cf. *Vasiṣṭha Dh. S.* (Führer's ed.), I. 34.
[8] 67.11.
[9] A. S. Altekar, *Position of Women in Hindu Civilization* (Banaras, 1938), 45.
[10] Marriage by capture was prevalent till recent times among the Hos of Bihar and the Bhuiyas of Orissa.

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According to Jolly the *gāndharva* or love marriage was a privilege of the nobles.[1] There is much sense in the view that this form of marriage was mainly confined to kṣatriyas and well-to-do classes, and prescribed for them.[2] But a close examination would show that it was prescribed for and followed by men and women of the other castes as well. This can be argued on the basis of the rules laid down in the brāhmaṇical law-books and on the strength of several examples drawn from the general literary works. Although most authorities permit the *gāndharva* marriage to the kṣatriyas[3] a note of dissent is sounded by Baudhāyana, who quotes the prevalent opinion that since the *gāndharva* marriage is based on mutual love it can be performed by all.[4] In subsequent times Nārada points out that this form of marriage is open to all castes.[5] Hence it will be wrong to think that love marriage was a prerogative of the nobles.

Special weight ought to be given to Vātsyāyana's views on the *gāndharva* marriage expounded in his *Kāmasūtra* of the third century AD, because this is the earliest and perhaps the only piece of technical literature which dwells upon the subject in some detail. According to him in other forms of marriage considerations of birth, money, and other requisites constitute the deciding factor, but in contrast to the other forms the *gāndharva* marriage is determined by mutual love.[6] It is obvious that the absence of these factors make the *gāndharva* non-aristocratic and hence fit for those who are not moved by the ideas of birth and money. Since it was natural for members of the two higher varṇas to be guided by these considerations, they would not readily take to the idea of love marriage. The permission of the *gāndharva* for the kṣatriyas by the Dharmaśāstras may have been used by the nobles as a legal justification for the satisfaction of their lust. At any rate it is clear that this form of marriage is allowed to the other varṇas as well.

We can form some idea about the prevalence of the *gāndharva* marriage among various castes from examples given in the Jātakas, Kāvyas and a much later work *Kathāsaritsāgara* although the inference cannot be regarded as conclusive. In a Jātaka both the parties in

[1] Jolly, *Hindu Law and Custom* (Calcutta, 1928), 126.
[2] Altekar, cit., 81; A.D. Pusalker, *Bhāsa, a Study* (Lahore, 1940), 369.
[3] *Baudh.*, I. 20. 12; *Manu*, III. 26; *Viṣnu*, XXIV. 28.
[4] *Baudh.*, I. 20. 16. [5] *Nar.*, XII. 44.
[6] H. C. Chakladar, *Social Life in Ancient India: A Study in Vātsyāyana's Kāmasūtra*, 143.

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love marriage belong to the merchant class.[1] In Bhāsa's writings generally kṣatriyas figure in the *gāndharva* marriage. The *Kathāsarit-sāgara*, a collection of old stories which may have been retouched to suit conditions in early mediaeval times when this text was compiled, furnishes at least seven stories of love marriage.[2] In two of them the bridegroom is a brāhmaṇa; in four of them he is a prince; and in one a merchant's daughter is married to a thief. Hence in the traditional examples, including that of Duṣyanta, mostly the princes figure as bridegrooms although the same cannot be said of the brides, who in several stories belong either to the lower castes or to the order of the mythical *apsarases*. None of these instances can be regarded as historical although they might reflect the social condition of early times to some extent. However, their value is limited by the fact that they are found in stories which mainly revolve round the exploits of the princes and priests.

On account of the continuity of many old social customs till the nineteenth century even later practices can be made to supplement the study of social conditions in the past. In some parts of India the term *gāndharva* now denotes remarriage among lower classes,[3] which clearly suggests that it was practised by them in the past as well. Thus it seems that in early times when class distinctions were not rigid and hence motives of birth and money not so important the *gāndharva* marriage prevailed among the kṣatriyas and others, but later its permission for the kṣatriya may have been used by the princes and the nobles as camouflage for their licentious love affairs leading to polygamy. In the later period this form of marriage contemplates love overtures and initiative on the part of the kṣatriya princes and not on the part of the kṣatriya princesses of which there is hardly any example. It is possible that in subsequent times it came to be confined only to the lower castes of which some trace can be found even in recent times.

On the basis of the preceding discussion we can say that the *āsura* and the *paiśāca* were generally permissible for the two lower varṇas. It is perhaps on account of this that Manu and the *Ādi Parva* emphatically reject these forms of marriage.[4] As regards the *rākṣasa* and

[1] *Jāt.* (Cowell's trans.), VI, 185.
[2] *Kathāsaritsāgara*, English trans., I, 45,63,103,216,270,299-300.
[3] Pusalker, op. cit., 375.
[4] *paiśācaścāsuraścaiva na kartavyau kadācan, Manu*, III. 25; *Ādi P.*, 67.12.

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gāndharva forms of marriage it seems that in early times they were practised by the kṣatriyas, but as this class developed a new sense of prestige and respectability they fell into disfavour with them.

The approved forms of marriage were generally meant for members of the first two varṇas and especially for the brāhmaṇas. In most cases the first four[1] and occasionally the first six[2] forms of marriage are recommended for the brāhmaṇas, which implies that the remaining four unapproved forms of marriage are meant for the other three castes. Of them the *rākṣasa* and *gāndharva* are permissible for the kṣatriyas. At several places it is stated that the *brāhma*, *daiva*, *prājāpatya*, and *ārṣa* forms of marriage are *dharmya*.[3] According to Kauṭilya the fact of their being *dharmya* signifies that the patriarchal element is supreme in them and not in the unapproved forms of marriage which requires the sanction of both the father and the mother.[4] If they are legal, why should they be commended for the brāhmaṇas alone and not for other varṇas which are the integral part of the brāhmaṇical social structure? Apparently the *dharmya* character of marriages imposes upon all the obligation to observe them. But since the brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas were charged with the responsibility of upholding the social order (*dharma*), it was essential that they should observe the approved forms of marriage. And, as would appear from Baudhāyana, there were compelling economic reasons for it. Discussing the suitability of various kinds of marriage for various castes, he clearly states that because of their preoccupations with agriculture and service the wives of vaiśyas and śūdras cannot be kept under control.[5] This suggests that the employment of lower castes in the primary task of production makes it necessary for their women to participate in it and thus slackens the bonds of dependence upon their husbands, but the withdrawal of upper castes from the producing activities, and the consequent non-participation of their womenfolk in

[1]Nārāyaṇa's commentary on *Āśvalāyana Gṛhyasūtra*, I. 6; *Baudh.*, I. 20. 10-11; *Viṣṇu*, XXIV. 27.

[2]*saḍānupūrvyā viprasya kṣatrasya caturo'varān. Mānu*, III. 23.

[3]*Gautama*, IV, 14-15; *Viṣṇu*, XXIV. 27-28; *AŚ* (Shamasastry's ed., 1924), III. 2; *Nar.*, XII. 44; *Ādi Parva*, 67.10.

[4]*pitṛpramāṇaścatvāraḥpūrve dharmyāḥ, matṛpitṛpramāṇāśśeṣaḥ. AŚ*, III. 2.

[5]*ayantritakalatrā hi vaiśyaśūdrā bhavanti, karṣaṇaśuśruṣādhikṛtatvāt. Baudh.*, 1.20.14.15.

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them, makes the latter comparatively much more dependent upon their male partners.

The fact that the forms of marriage differed from caste to caste and especially between the higher and lower castes has a parallel in the early history of Rome. In Rome under the early rule of the Republic there were three forms of marriage, *usus*, *confarreatio*, and *coemptio*. *Usus*, which required no ceremony and was dissoluble at will, was an old plebeian form of marriage. *Coemptio*, which meant a deed of purchase giving the husband a contractual right to the possession of wife, was a later plebeian form of marriage. *Confarreatio* involved a deed of transfer placing the bride under her husband's authority and was a patrician form of marriage.[1] It can be compared to the *brāhma* form of marriage, which is regarded as the most important in the approved category.

Considerations of caste are introduced in the regulations regarding the dissolution of the marriage tie. As endogamy is a vital requisite for marriage, the moment a person loses his caste his wife abandons him and can take another husband.[2] Dissolution of marriage tie, however, should not be confused with divorce, which according to the Dharmaśāstras is more or less unilateral, to be effected by the husband on grounds of adultery, barrenness, disobedience, etc. Kauṭilya does not permit divorce in the case of the first four approved kinds of marriage,[3] which shows that it can take place in the unapproved forms. Since some of the unapproved forms of marriage are generally permitted for the lower castes, this implies that divorce is favoured among them and not among the higher castes.

In the case of the absence of the husband for a long time, Kauṭilya as well as the authors of the Dharmaśāstras permit the wife a number of options including those of remarriage and levirate. Kauṭilya lays down that a brāhmaṇa wife without children should wait for four years, a kṣatriya for three, a vaiśya for two, and a śūdra for one, in case the husband goes out on journey and does not return after having made his promise. If the wife is with children or she has been provided with means of livelihood, the period of waiting is extended but the difference between the various castes maintained.[4] The

[1] George Thomson, *Studies in Ancient Greek Society* (New York, 1949), 92-93.
[2] *Nar.*, XII. 97; cf. XII. 37.
[3] *amokṣodharmavivāhānām iti. AŚ*, III. 4. [4] *AŚ*, III. 4.

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Dharmaśāstras also prescribe similar periods of waiting in such cases. Vasiṣṭha lays down that a brāhmaṇa and kṣatriya woman with children should wait for the absent husband for five years, a vaiśya for four years, and a śūdra for three years. If the wife is without children, the period is reduced by one year. After the end of the period, as Vasiṣṭha ordains, the woman shall live with those who are united with her husband in interest, or by birth, or by the funeral cake, or by water libations or by descent from the same family in preference. Further, while a member of the family is living, she shall never go to a stranger.[1] Later lawgivers such as Nārada and Devala raise the length of the waiting period for all castes, the highest being eight years for the brāhmaṇa wife with child and the lowest being two years in the case of the śūdra wife. If the wife is without child, in each case the waiting period is reduced by half. After the waiting period is over the woman may betake herself to another man,[2] for which no offence is imputed to her. In this connection Nārada states that no definite period is prescribed for a śūdra woman whose husband has gone on journey.[3] This is exactly what Medhātithi states while commenting on a passage from Manu,[4] who does not fix the period of absence on the basis of caste but according to the purpose for which it is meant.

Several authorities lay down special rules regarding the wives of those brāhmaṇas who go abroad for Vedic studies. In such a case, according to Gautama, the wife should abstain from having intercourse with other men for twelve years.[5] In this context Kauṭilya prescribes a period of ten years for the brāhmaṇa wife if she is without children and twelve years if she was with children.[6] Curiously enough here Manu appears to be more liberal, for he limits the period of waiting for the wife to six years.[7]

A study of these regulations indicates two notable features. First, in the earlier texts the period of waiting for women of different castes is comparatively shorter, but it is increased by the lawgivers of the fourth and fifth centuries AD. Secondly, the lower the caste the shorter is the period of waiting and the easier to secure the dissolution of the marriage tie. Especially in the case of the śūdra wife it is stated that no period of waiting is fixed for her if her husband is absent. In recent times separation has been a common practice among the

[1] *Vas*, XVII. 78-79.
[2] *Nar.*, XII. 98-101. [3] ibid., XII. 100. [4] Medhātithi on *Manu*, IX. 76.
[5] *dvādaśavarṣāṇi brāhmaṇasya vidyāsambandhe. Gautama*, XVIII. 18.
[6] *AŚ*, III. 4. [7] *Manu*, IX. 76.

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lower castes,[1] and things may not have been quite different in ancient times. For lack of actual instances it is difficult to ascertain whether the rules laid down in the law-books were followed by members of different castes. They may not have been literally true, but they do indicate that the stability of marriage depended on caste hierarchy.

There is hardly any definite evidence either literary or inscriptional to show that widow remarriage, so common among the lower castes in our times, was practised by them in ancient times. But it would not be surprising if this were so. A passage of Manu bearing on this question has been the subject of different interpretations. Sarvajña-nārāyaṇa and Rāmacandra state that widow remarriage cannot take place among the brāhmaṇas, which implies that it can take place among the three other castes. Rāghavānanda holds that this cannot apply to the *brāhma* and *daiva* forms of marriage, and since these forms of marriage are evidently meant for brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas, apparently other castes can take to widow remarriage.[2]

The presumption about the prevalence of widow remarriage among the lower castes is further strengthened by the fact that *niyoga* was practised by the śūdras in the early centuries of the Christian era. The Vedic or the epic traditions do not know any regulation confining levirate to any particular varṇa although most examples of this practice known from them relate to the kṣatriya princesses and occasionally to the brāhmaṇas.[3] In later times, however, the Smṛtis restrict it to the śūdras. Manu declares that *niyoga* cannot take place in marriages which are performed according to the *mantras*.[4] Since *mantras* are not permitted in the marriage of the śūdras,[5] it means that they can take to levirate. He further states that widow remarriage and levirate are regarded by the twice-born (*dvija*) learned in the Śastras as a beastly practice,[6] which implies that he takes no exception to their

[1]Jolly, op. cit., 147.

[2]*na vivāhavidhāvuktam vidhavāvedanaṃ punaḥ. Manu*, IX. 65, See the various commentaries on it in V. N. Mandalik's *Mānavadharmaśāstra*, II, 1148.

[3]S. C., Sarkar, *Some Aspects of the Earliest Social History of India* (Oxford, 1928), 78-79, 163-185.

[4]*nodvāhikeṣu mantreṣu niyogaḥ kīrtyate kvacit*. IX. 65.

[5]*Vas*., I. 25.

[6]*ayaṃ dvijairhi vidvadbhiḥ paśudharmo vigarhitaḥ . . . . Manu*, IX. 66. On the basis of this passage Jolly suggests a contradiction in the views of Manu (*Hindu Law and Custom*, 155) re: *niyoga*, but it can be easily resolved if we bear in mind that levirate is permissible for others but not for the twice-born.

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adoption by the śūdras. If the term *dvija* used here is taken as a brāhmaṇa, it would mean that widow remarriage and levirate are meant for the remaining three castes. But as would appear from another source, perhaps these practices are intended by Manu for the śūdras. Commenting on Yājñavalkya (I.69) Viśvarūpa takes the view that the Smṛti texts about *niyoga* refer to the śūdras and adds that this usage obtained among the śūdras. In support of his view he produces two verses of Vṛddha Manu, and a *gāthā* of the *Vāya* which states that *niyoga* is prescribed for the kṣatriyas by foolish and ignorant people out of greed.[1]

Regulations laid down by the Dharmaśāstras regarding polygamy and monogamy take account of caste. Polygamy, as is characteristic of a patriarchal class society, seems to have been prevalent among members of the upper varṇas. The number of wives assigned to a person is fixed according to his caste. Generally a brāhmaṇa can take four wives, a kṣatriya three, and a śūdra one.[2] In the opinion of Vasiṣṭha, however, a brāhmaṇa can marry three wives, a kṣatriya two, and a vaiśya and a śūdra one each.[3] Numerous examples from ancient Indian historical traditions show that princes and priests maintained a large number of wives. Polygamy of the upper castes seems to be in line with their larger share in the social surplus, just as the monogamy of the lower castes is an index of their inability to maintain a large family.[4]

Considerations of caste had also something to do with the barbarous practice of burning the widow on the funeral pyre of her husband. The custom was confined to the kṣatriya caste comprising rulers and fighters, among whom the sense of possession and love for a good family name was the strongest. The *Bṛhaddevatā* states that the practice of *sati* is valid for the kṣatriya,[5] and an early mediaeval work which eulogizes the practice of the immolation of the widow points out that it cannot be allowed to the brāhmaṇas.[6] Instances of immolation of widows along with the husband, either traditional or

[1]Quoted in Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, II, 604.

[2]*Viṣṇu*, XXIV. I. 4.

[3]*tisro brāhmaṇasya bhāryā varṇānupūrveṇa dve rājanyasya ekaikā vaiśya-śūdrayoḥ. Vas.*, I. 24.

[4]R. S. Sharma, *Some Economic Aspects of the Caste System in Ancient India* (Patna, 1952), 19-24.

[5]Quoted in Altekar, op. cit., 150.

[6]*Padma Purāṇa* (Anandasrama Sanskrit Series), V. 49. 72-73.

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historical, relate only to the kṣatriyas, although historical cases are to be found from the early mediaeval period onwards. Perhaps there is no example of a vaiśya or a śūdra woman mounting the funeral pyre of her husband. This suggests that *sati* was a typically aristocratic practice confined to the kṣatriyas.

Considerable attention has been given to the subject of intercaste marriage in ancient times.[1] But examples of intercaste marriage found in the Vedic and epic literature[2] and quoted by enthusiasts do not help the cause of social reform much. First, generally these marriages are in the *anuloma* order—the higher caste man marrying the lower caste woman. Second, the majority of instances relates to the marriage between the two higher castes—the brāhmaṇa bridegroom and the kṣatriya bride. Although we are told about the kṣatriya Yayāti marrying Devayānī, daughter of the brāhmaṇa priest Śukrācārya, the ground given for such union is interesting. While asking for the hand of Yayāti, Devayānī pleads that the brāhmaṇa and the kṣatriya are inseparable, and hence Yayāti should have no objection in accepting her as his wife.[3] We do not know the time when this argument was introduced, but the practice of matrimonial combination between members of the two higher varṇas continues into later times. The early Buddhist and Jaina texts indicate that as a rule vaiśyas, śūdras and outcastes did not, or could not, aspire to marry from the kṣatriya and brāhmaṇa families.[4] On the other hand the works of Kālidāsa show 'instances of intercaste (*asavarṇa*) marriages, specially between the first two Varṇas, the Brāhmaṇas and the Kṣatriyas.'[5] Further, in the Gupta and the post-Gupta period there are at least four epigraphic examples of intermarriage between the two upper varṇas.[6]

Well-known traditions relate that such sages as Kaṇva, Vatsa,

[1]Various views are to be found in Ksitimohan Sen's *Bhāratavarsa me Jātibheda* (Calcutta, 1940), which also sheds fresh light on the subject, pp.80-95); B. N. Dutt, *Studies in India Social Polity* (Calcutta, 1944), chap. XII; B. K. Sarkar, 'Varnāśrama Dharma and Race-fusion in India,' *Modern Review*, Feb. 1917; and R. P. Chanda, 'Intercaste Marriage in Buddhist India,' *Modern Review*, 1919, 595 ff.

[2]*Bhāratavarṣa me Jātibheda*, 80-95.

[3]*Ādi Parva*, 76. 18.

[4]B. C. Law, *India as Described in Early Texts of Buddhism and Jainism* (London, 1941), 180.

[5]R. B. Pandey, *Vikramāditya of Ujjayinī* (Banaras, 1951).

[6]Fleet, *CII*, III, 152 and 245.

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Satyakāmajāvāla were sons of slave women (*dāsīputras*) and that Śantanu was the son of a fishwife.[1] Later traditions report that Candragupta was the son of a śūdra woman called Murā. But in post-Maurya and Gupta times such examples become rare. Viṣṇu condemns the union of the first three castes with the śūdra woman, and Manu ordains that the brāhmaṇas and the kṣatriyas shall not keep a śūdra woman as their chief wife. According to the latter even in times of adversity such a practice is not authorized by ancient traditions.[2] Particularly, the brāhmaṇa's marriage with the śūdra comes in for strong condemnation and is regarded as most undesirable and degrading.[3] The law-books express the view that the śūdra wife is to be married for the sake of pleasure,[4] which precludes the possibility of her having a legal status.

Notwithstanding the permission to take wives from the lower castes these wives do not enjoy the same position. Marriage does not admit them to the caste of their higher caste husbands. According to Manu if a brāhmaṇa takes wives from different castes, provisions have to be made for the different kinds of worship and accommodation according to the status of each varṇa.[5] Not only are different ceremonies prescribed for wives belonging to different castes, but even the modes of greetings meant for wishing them vary according to their caste. It is laid down that the teacher's wives who are born of low varṇas shall be greeted from a distance and not by touching their feet.[6] Again, children born from wives of lower castes are condemned to a lower status. This is exemplified by the law of inheritance which allots four shares to the brāhmana son, three shares to the kṣatriya son, two shares to the vaiśya son, and one share to the śūdra son.[7] Apparently such regulations were intended to act in favour of the higher varṇas and could not create suitable climate for the consummation of intercaste marriage on a footing of equality. *Anuloma* and *pratiloma* connections, especially the latter, are represented in the Dharmaśast-

[1] *Bhāratavarṣa me Jātibheda*, 213.
[2] *Viṣṇu*, XXVI. 4-7; *Manu*, III. 14.
[3] *Manu*, III. 17-19 and 64.
[4] *Vas.*, XVIII. 18; cf. *Nirukta*, XII. 13; *Viṣṇu*, XXVI. 5.
[5] *yadi svāścāpurāścaiva vinderanyoṣito dvijāḥ, tāsāṃ varṇakrameṇa syājjyaiṣṭhyaṃ pujā ca veśma ca. Manu*, IX. 85.
[6] *Viṣṇu*, XXXII. 35; cf. *Manu*, II. 210.
[7] *Baudh.*, II, 3.19; *Vas.*, XVII. 48-50; *Viṣṇu*, XVIII. 38-40.

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ras as giving rise to numerous irregular castes. The later Vedic literature mentions about eight mixed castes besides the four regular castes.[1] Vasiṣṭha raises their number to ten,[2] Baudhāyana to fifteen,[3] Gautama to eighteen,[4] Manu to about sixty,[5] but the same mixed origin is not given to the same caste in all the texts. The *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa*, a work of the early mediaeval period, raises the number of the mixed castes to over one hundred,[6] but this is not the final number. However transgression of caste endogamy is seen as denigration of the existing castes leading to the rise of new castes. But this theory of the lawgivers does not fully explain the proliferation of castes. On the contrary it seems to be an after-thought to provide place for the numerous tribal peoples in the fourfold order. It is evident that the Niṣādas, Caṇḍālas, Pulkasas, etc., were tribal communities, but once they were admitted into the brāhmaṇical society ingenious origins within the framework of the varṇa system were suggested for them, and here the fiction of intercaste marriage or *varṇasaṃkara* came in for handy use.

The theory of caste endogamy should not be regarded as a peculiarly Indian phenomenon, for it is to be found in some other early societies. Writing about the Saxons of the early Frank Empire (ninth century AD) Rudolf states: 'The race consists of four ranks of men, the noble, the free, the freedmen and the servi. And it is by law established that no order shall in contracting marriage, remove the landmarks of its lot; but noble must marry noble, freeman freewoman, freedman freedwoman, serf handmaid. If any take a wife of different or higher rank then he has to expiate the act with his life.'[7] It is clear that this early mediaeval feudal law is much more severe in character than the ancient Indian law, which in such a case does not provide death punishment but only degrades the higher caste people to a lower status.

The present study shows that certain forms of unapproved marriages, particularly the *āsura* which was the most widely prevalent and in which woman enjoyed some freedom and deserved consideration, were recommended for the lower castes. Again, divorce was generally per-

[1]*Bhāratavarṣa me Jātibheda*, 210.
[2]*Vas.*, XVIII. 1-9. [3]*Baudh.*, I. 17. 1-15.
[4]*Gautama*, IV. 16-21. [5]*Manu*, X. 8-49.
[6]Quoted in *Bhāratavarṣa me Jātibheda*, 212.
[7]Stubbs, *Constitutional History of England*, third ed., I, 43.

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missible for lower caste women, for whom the period of husband's absence which justified desertion on the part of the wife was of no consequence; thus the shortest duration of waiting was recommended for the wives of śūdras. Further, *niyoga*, which in the Vedic period was practised largely by the brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas, came to be confined to the śūdras from the early centuries of the Christian era onwards. Similarly polygamy was popular with the upper castes and monogamy with the lower castes. *Satī* system was mainly confined to the kṣatriyas, who were moved by a strong sense of possession and a good family name. Lastly, instances of intercaste marriages mainly concerned men of higher and women of lower castes, and were chiefly limited to the union between the brāhmaṇas and the kṣatriyas, The *varṇasaṃkara* or the caste-intermix[illegible]heory was meant mainly to accommodate foreign and indigenous [illegible]bes in the caste hierarchy.

In several important respects the marital relations and practices of the upper varṇas seem to have been different from those of the two lower varṇas. Members of the two upper castes are credited with a feeling of exaggerated respectability about their own customs and that of contempt for the marriage practices of the lower castes. Judging from the modern point of view we find an element of consent and mutual co-operation as forming the basis of marriage among members of the lower castes. Perhaps the vaiśyas, and particularly the śūdras, had not as yet been able to completely overcome their old tribal customs guaranteeing more freedom to women. But consideration for women was undermined among the upper varṇas by the development of a strong sense of possession over property and wife alike. Further, women from the two upper varṇas had little economic rights or activities and were therefore more dependent on their husbands. But the continued employment of the womenfolk of lower castes in the producing activities prevented radical changes in their marital relations, and they were never thrown completely at the mercy of the menfolk. Even now many Himalayan tribes, whose Hinduism is skin-deep, rate their brides highly.

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CHAPTER VII

Communication and Social Cohesion

I. Origin of Communication

In ancient India the forms and media of communication were very limited. In the beginning oral communication was far more important. In Vedic times public debates played an important part. We come across several Vedic tribal assemblies which performed deliberative functions. The earliest assembly of this type was the *vidatha*, in which people aspired for talking big. Valiant men are described as raising their voice in this gathering. The householder prayed for warding off death so that while he was alive he could speak to the *vidatha*. In the deliberations of this body advanced age was given some weightage, which is a characteristic of primitive assemblies.

Debate was also carried on in the two other Vedic assemblies called the *sabhā* and *samiti*, although it is not to be found in the early popular assemblies of the other Indo-European peoples. We cannot definitely say that the *vidatha* was a political body, but the *sabhā* seems to have possessed political character. The Vedic king considered its advice to be of supreme importance and could not possibly do without the support of its members, who hotly discussed the proposals.

In a passage from the *Atharvaveda* the *sabhā* is called 'inter-change of talk.' The king prayed for the support of the *sabhā*, and prayer was made in it for avoiding discord and securing cooperation. The *sabhā* also discussed pastoral affairs. Since cattle-rearing was a great source of the livelihood of the people, members of the *sabhā* delighted in dwelling on the virtues of the kine. People expressed their anxieties for the fattening of the lean cattle. They showered praises upon the kine and recalled their vigour with gusto in the meeting.

The *samiti* performed military, religious and political functions. Its political functions were far more prominent, and it seems that at one stage it even elected the Vedic king. Both the *Ṛgveda* and *Atharvaveda* stress the need for achieving harmony in the *samiti*. The poet

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says that the counsel (*mantra*) be common, the assembly (*samiti*) be common, heart (*manas*) be common, and their thoughts (*citta*) be united. They strove to reach common agreement in the *samiti*. Insistence on unanimity is in accord with the practice obtaining in primitive societies. All the prayers and ceremonies, charms and counter-charms were directed to one end alone, namely to get the better of one's rival in the debate, to induce the members present to accept his viewpoint, to make his speech pleasant to members and to bend the minds of those who held different views. The *samiti* therefore was a great deliberative body, and its members carried on active discussions for achieving concord. Apparently the king-president was expected to conduct the deliberations in such a manner as to bring about a consensus of opinion.

In post-Vedic times we come across the *pariṣad* or the *gaṇa sabhā*, which debated various questions. The post-Vedic *pariṣad* consisted mainly of the brāhmaṇas, who tried to interpret the laws laid down in the Dharmaśāstras. The *gaṇa sabhā* was characteristic of the republics, and it was composed of the kṣatriya nobles, who discussed things of common interest affecting the republic.

In addition to these, numerous religious assemblies were held to sort out theological differences between members of the same sect. Such assemblies were especially held by the Buddhists. Their councils were successively convened at Vaiśālī, Pāṭaliputra and Puruṣapura, and in all the meetings members of the Buddhist church tried to establish by means of discussion what they considered to be the original teachings of the Buddha. If we rely on the procedure which was followed in the meeting of the Buddhist *saṅgha* according to the *Vinaya Piṭaka* it will appear that they followed the democratic method of introducing resolution and inviting opinions on it. The resolution was considered to have been passed only if there was no dissenting voice. If members kept silent it was regarded to be a sign of agreement. The views of the members were ascertained through voting, and apparently the majority of votes decided the issue.

In the seventh century AD two important religious assemblies were held by Harṣa, one at Prayaga and the other at Kanauj, but for different purposes. They were summoned to preach the virtues of Buddhism, and in them the Chinese pilgrim Hsüan Tsang gave religious discourses to the people.

We have no idea about the nature and details of debate conducted

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in the various assemblies and judicial courts. The mode, content and quality of debate may have developed as a result of the growth of *tarka*, *nyāya*, and *mimāṃsā*, which represented the different branches of ancient Indian logic. We notice a remarkable growth in logic, especially in the elaboration of various types of proofs, in the 4th-6th centuries AD. This development seems to be connected with land litigation. The law-books of Gupta times not only provide for partition of land but also detailed discussion on boundary disputes.

It is also not clear how the decisions taken by the councils, various assemblies and judicial courts were taken to the common people. Obviously they were orally transmitted. The decisions of the religious councils were recorded and written down, but these could be explained only to those who were sufficiently familiar with the idiom of a particular religion. Disputations and argumentation between the followers of rival sects were carried on in public, and they tried to establish the superiority of their own religion or viewpoint. The tradition of *śāstrārtha* still continues, and pandits engage in it in public. The decisions of the judicial courts may have been communicated in the form of *śāsana* (royal charters) or *vyavasthā* (judgment given by the learned members of the court). The system of *vyavasthā* continued in Mithila till the 19th century and even later. The courts set up by the East India Company at Calcutta referred disputed matters to the pandits who gave their advice in Sanskrit or Bengali.

Oral examination played an important part in admission to the great university of Nālandā. The university maintained a *dvārapaṇḍita*, who interviewed the candidates seeking entrance to it. Only those who gave satisfactory answers were admitted into the university.

II. Written Communication

Although the Indians knew the art of writing as early as 2500 BC their earliest decipherable records do not go beyond the third century BC, and between the end of the Harappa period and the reign of Aśoka inscriptions have been so far conspicuous by their absence. Therefore written communication on a large scale started in India only in the third century BC when royal orders of Aśoka were inscribed on rocks and pillars and scattered all over the country, except the deep south, and even in Afghanistan. In the beginning education in ancient India may have been mainly oral, and so the Indian

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tradition attached the greatest importance to memory. Although on the basis of the forms and contents, the Vedic literature is considered to be as old as 1500 BC, the earliest available manuscripts are not earlier than the tenth century AD. Because of the importance of memory Vedic texts are called *Śrutis*, which literally means something which has been heard. Devout Hindus do not consider the Vedic literature to be the creation of any human being, but something revealed by the God. The Vedic texts therefore are regarded so much sacrosanct that every word has to be correctly pronounced. Many Vedic hymns (*mantras*) are used in different Hindu rituals, and it is believed that if they are not recited with proper accent they nullify all the merits and the virtues which a sacrificer can otherwise acquire.

The Vedic *mantras*, which belonged to the different schools of compilers, were passed on from generation to generation of the pupils, who retained and recited them faithfully without altering them. Since great store was set by memory in disseminating knowledge and information among the literate people, most religious literature of the Hindus was written in verse. As it is difficult to memorize the matter composed in prose, the major part of the ancient Indian literature, especially of Vedic times, was written in verse. The verses were easy to reproduce because of rhyming.

Although a good deal of the later Vedic literature comprising the *Brāhmaṇas* and *Upaniṣads* was compiled in prose, it was only near about the fifth century BC that there developed the *sūtra* style of prose. The idea was to convey the maximum meaning through the minimum number of words. Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, a work on grammar, is a model of terse, precise and condensed work. Several other works in prose following the *sūtra* style were compiled from the fifth century BC onwards. The *Dharmasūtras* dealt with laws regulating state and society; the *Gṛhyasūtras* laid down domestic rituals for the householders; and the *Śrautasūtras* treated and elaborated Vedic rituals.

Many of these *sūtras* are not intelligible to the modern Sanskritists without the aid of the commentaries. This may have been also the case with the literate and educated people in ancient times. That is why several commentaries were written to explain these *sūtras*. The commentaries served another purpose also: they interpreted the *sūtras* in the light of the changing conditions in subsequent centuries. Thus

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the scholiasts played a significant part in perpetuating but at the same time in marginally modifying and refining the classical laws and traditions. This happened in all the branches of Sanskrit literature such as grammar, philosophy, literary texts, Dharmaśāstras, Śrautasūtras, etc. We notice a hierarchical series of commentaries, which appear successively one after the other as *bhāṣya*, *vivṛti*, *vyākhyā*, *ṭikā*, *ṭippaṇi*, *kaumudī*, etc. Several commentaries appeared in the twelfth century, and one on the grammar of Pāṇini was written in the eighteenth century.

Similarly the Pāli commentaries called the *aṭṭhakathās* were written to explain the earlier Pāli canons. The Prākrit texts were elaborated and explained in the *curṇis*, *niryuktis*, etc. All these commentaries served more or less the same objective, namely to maintain the essentials of the old system and at the same time to explain them in such a manner as to meet the requirements of the changing situations. The commentaries therefore indicate both continuities and ruptures in social values and systems.

In spite of the prevalence of the *sūtra* style from the fifth century BC onwards the use of the verse continued to be popular with the compilers of the ancient Indian law-books, epics and *Purāṇas*. The later law-books compiled in the early centuries of the Christian era were called *Smṛtis*, which literally means something that can be remembered in contrast to the *Śrutis* which means something heard or revealed. To facilitate memorization all the *Smṛtis* were written in the form of *ślokas* or verses. So also were the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata* and *Purāṇas*. In all these texts was used the most popular verse called the *anuṣṭupa chanda*, which was the easiest to get by heart.

III. Interpolation and Inflation

The various genres of religious literature were meant for the edification of the people, but most ancient authors preferred to remain anonymous. We cannot ascertain the name, date, place, ancestry and antecedents of most authors from Vedic times down to the beginning of the Christian era. Apparently in the Indian scheme of things individuals did not enjoy much importance; it was the school to which the author or the compiler belonged really mattered. Thus the compilation of the Vedic literature and the *Mahābhārata* is assigned to Vyāsa, but it is difficult to demonstrate his historicity. Similar is the case with Vālmīki, the author of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

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In spite of the great importance attached to memory and correct recitation of the Vedic and other religious texts, they continued to be inflated by subsequent writers through interpolations. Since it was not easy to insert matter in the middle of the book mostly additions were made at the beginning and end. In the case of the *Ṛgveda*, the earliest specimen of Indo-European literature, Books I-X were added to the main body later. Even Books VIII and IX seem to be later additions, and insertions have been detected in Book IV. The *Mahābhārata*, which has been a great instrument of propagating Hindu ideas and values, was subjected to a similar process. Originally it consisted of 8800 verses and was called *Jaya*, then this number rose to 24000 and the text came to be known as *Bhārata*, and finally by Gupta times this number swelled to 1000,000 and the text came to be known as the *Mahābhārata*. However its critical edition compiled through the labours of various scholars working on it for nearly 50 years consists of nearly 78675 verses. Its *Ādi Parva*, which literally means the chapter at the beginning, is a later addition, and so also seems to be the case with the *Anuśāsana Parva* and *Śānti Parva*, which lay down the royal duties (*rājadharma*). The younger epic *Rāmāyāṇa*, which continues to play a great part in popularizing typical Hindu values regarding patriarchal family, consisted first of 6,000 verses, then of 12,000, and finally of 24,000 verses by the fifth century AD. Inflation also affected the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya, intended for the political education of the prince in ancient times. Only Books II and III of this text, which altogether consists of fifteen books, were compiled earlier; all the other chapters were inserted later, possibly in the beginning of the Christian era, and even as late as early medieval times.

The ancient texts were inflated not because of the authors' penchant for self-glorification; in every case they opted for anonymity. They were inflated in order to continue older values, to validate new values and practices, and to contain social discontent through this method. In the epics interpolations appeared mainly in the form of myths which were supernatural and exaggerated analogies drawn from human experience in man's dealings with man and nature. Interpolations also appeared in the form of didactic portions which tried to idealise contemporary values and practices. The commentaries on the ancient texts served the same purpose as their inflation, namely to adjust the old texts to later ideas, institutions, customs, etc. The contents of the *Dharmaśāstras* belonging to the pre-Christian era were

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versified and amplified to suit the developments that had taken place in the first five centuries after Christ. In the process of amplification the epics, the law-books and many other ancient texts became full of internal inconsistencies and contradictions, but these were ignored by those who made use of them for talking to the common people; only such portions were highlighted as met the exigencies of time, place and circumstances and served to perpetuate the interests of the dominant sections of society.

IV. Propaganda Regarding Divinity of Kingship

Propaganda played an important role in upholding political authority in ancient India. An important device to emphasize the royal power and to make it acceptable to the common people was to associate divine elements with the royalty. The process started in the Vedic period, when kingship was no better than the chiefdom of a tribe or tribes. The later Vedic coronation formulas prescribe prayers to various gods for conferring their respective qualities on the king. Of course they clearly mention the human parents of the king, but at the same time they create the impression that the king possesses some divine attributes. At least a late Vedic text, the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, represents the king as the manifestation of Prajāpati, who was the god of creation. In the later portion of the *Atharva Veda* a king is described as the god who is above mortals. The idea of the divinity of the king did not prevail on a large scale in Vedic times. The Maurya king Aśoka displayed divine support in his inscriptions. Although a Buddhist ruler, Aśoka repeatedly called himself *devānāṃpriya*, which literally means dear to god. The title was continued by his grandson Daśaratha.

The concept of the divinity of the king gained wide currency in post-Maurya times. Curiously it was widely propagated by the Kuṣāṇas, who, though foreigners, had finally settled down as kings of the greater part of northern India in the first and second centuries. The Kuṣāṇa kings called themselves *devaputra*, which literally means the son of the god. This title was as much popularized by the Kuṣāṇa kings as the term *devānāṃpriya* by Aśoka.

The use of the appellation *devaputra* was theoretically justified by the *Suvarṇabhāsottamasūtra*, a Buddhist text of the *Mahāyāna* school. In this text the question is asked why the king born as man is called god and son of god. The answer given is that before being born as

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man he lived among the gods, and because each of the thirty-three gods contributed to the making of his substance he came to be called *devaputra*. A similar explanation of his divine origin is given in the *Manu Smṛti*, which was compiled in the second century AD and which commanded wide sanction and authority among the Hindus. Manu[1] does not use the term *devaputra* for a king, but he clearly states that the king is invested with the respective qualities of eight gods. He asserts that even if the king is a child he should not be disregarded, because he functions as a great divinity in the form of a human being. The divinity of the king is also strongly represented in the *Śānti Parva*, which has many verses in common with the law-book of Manu.

In the *Śānti Parva* the elder statesman Bhīṣma is asked as to why the king who has two hands, two legs and all the other organs which an ordinary human being has should be allowed to rule over all the other human beings. Bhīṣma makes out a lengthy justification for this phenomenon. He points out that in ancient days anarchy was rampant, and so people made an agreement among themselves. They undertook to shun a person who speaks much, encroaches on other's property and violates women's chastity. Fortified by this social agreement they approached Brahmā for a lord whom they would together worship and who would therefore protect them. Brahmā asked Manu to undertake the work of governing these people, but Manu refused because it would be an enormous task to control people who were wicked and untruthful. The people finally overcame the reluctance of Manu by promising to pay 1/50 of gold and 1/10 of grain for increasing his treasury. They further promised that those who would become foremost in the use of weapons would follow Manu in the same manner as the other gods followed Indra. In return they sought the protection of the king. The king was assured that 1/4 of spiritual merit, which the subjects protected by the king would earn, would accrue to the king. At another place in the *Śānti Parva* it is stated that Viṣṇu created a son born out of his mind to shoulder the responsibility of administration. Thus at two places the *Śānti Parva* ascribes the origin of kingship to divine agencies such as Viṣṇu and Brahmā. Since the *Mahābhārata* was recited and read at all places obviously its compilers popularized the divinity of the king to strengthen royal power.

[1]Chapter VII. 8.

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As the law-book of Manu and the *Śānti Parva* were compiled in the time of the Kuṣāṇas, they tended to strengthen the royal power of the Kuṣāṇas and their contemporaries. The Kuṣāṇas also adopted a few other means of propaganda to stress their divinity. They erected *devakulas* or deity-houses and installed therein the statues of the dead rulers. These structures served as temples. It is suggested that the Kuṣāṇas adopted this practice from the Romans who had borrowed it from Egypt, where funerary temples were erected in honour of the dead pharaohs. The Kuṣāṇa kings were also deified by the representation of the divine aura round their busts on the coins. On the gold coins the shoulders of the Kuṣāṇa kings are surrounded by the shining rays of flames. The nimbus (*prabhāmaṇḍala*) appears on some of their gold coins, especially on those of Huviṣka, who is ornamented with the nimbus, flames and clouds. The nimbus was a particular feature of the divinities portrayed on the Kuṣāṇa coins. Clearly in order to demonstrate their celestial origin the Kuṣāṇa kings got themselves depicted on the coins with the nimbus, aura, clouds or flames. They therefore used art as an important medium of propaganda.

The Kuṣāṇa adoption of art and writing to propagate their divinity has some indigenous parallels. The Sātavāhana ruler Gautamīputra Śātakarṇi, who flourished in the second century AD, is compared to different gods such as Yama, Varuṇa, Indra, Kubera, etc. This practice was also followed by the Gupta kings, who are compared to Viṣṇu on the ground that they preserve and protect people. Lakṣmī, wife of Viṣṇu and goddess of prosperity, appears on many Gupta coins. Therefore the Vaiṣṇavite affiliations of the Gupta kings may have served some political purpose. A striking thing about the Gupta kings is that they are called *devas*, which clearly represents them as gods, although, unlike the Kuṣāṇa kings they are not called the son of the gods.

From the 6th-7th centuries onwards the kings began to be given solar and lunar family trees. By that time Surya and Candra had come to be regarded as gods. To the solar dynasty belonged Rāma, who was regarded in the *Rāmāyaṇa* as an incarnation of Viṣṇu, and to the lunar dynasty belonged the famous Pāṇḍavas or the five heroes of the *Mahābhārata*. Although Aśoka issued numerous inscriptions containing measures to regulate society, religion and administration, he never mentioned his family tree in them. It is for the first time from the sixth century AD or the seventh century AD onwards that

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tribal chiefs who rose to be kings and generously rewarded brāhmaṇas were given high and ancient family pedigrees as a mark of grantitude.

Sometimes the horoscope of ancient heroes was ascribed to later kings by the astrologers. The horoscope of the moment when Pṛthvīrāja Cauhān was conceived by his mother is described after the horoscope of Rāma as given in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. But actually the planetary positions were different in the two cases, and it can be easily seen that the horoscope of Pṛthvīrāja was fictitious. The astrologers tried to represent the occasions of the births of kings as highly auspicious. The births of Haṛsa and the Cāḷukya king Vikramāditya VI were described as great propitious events, on the basis of which astrologers foretold their glorious future. All this was done to emphasize that they were destined to be great rulers. The practice of connecting royal families with old gods and heroes spread throughout the country. In the Jaina literature the Vidyādharas were regarded as important gods in the period between 600 and 1200. Because of their strong influence in western India the royal families of Śilāhāras ruling at Goa, Kolhapur and Thana called themselves the descendants of the Vidyādharas.[1]

The priests and other composers told the people of the exploits and achievements of the king. The practice of eulogising the services of the king started in Vedic times. The earliest example is found in the *dānastuti*, in which the priests highly commend the charities given by the king and point out the meritorious consequences flowing from this activity. Great sacrifices in the epics were occasions for distribution of wealth collected as tribute by the kings, who also fed people sumptuously on such occasions. But the major share of royal gifts went unilaterally to the priests who chanted *mantras* and sang the praises of the sacrifice. The priests did not contribute anything to the central pool of gifts, taxes and tributes gathered by the king; they contributed only words and benedictions. The practice of singing the praises of the king, in order to emphasise his prestige and influence, was kept up by the *bhāṭas* and *cāraṇas* and continued till recent times. The praise-singing function flourished day by day. Whatever little narratives we have relating to kings in the post-Vedic period invariably speak of their success and achievements. Obviously this was meant for propaganda. Thus although Alexander's invasion of India

[1]For details see V.S. Pathak, *Ancient Historians of India*, Bombay, 1963, 131-44.

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is regarded as a great event in the history of the ancient world, his conquests find no mention in any ancient Indian writing.

The custom of praising the achievements of the king continued throughout ancient times. The earliest instance is furnished by the inscriptions which were issued by Aśoka. They contain a number of royal orders in Prākrit, which was the popular language in those days, and represent Aśoka as a model of virtue and a benevolent father of his subjects. He gave up war and violence when he found that in the Kaliṅga war as many as 100,000 people were slaughtered, and many more persons died. Obviously the slaughter of so many people seems to be a great boast. The claim of Aśoka that he succeeded in establishing *dharma* in all parts of the country is also boastful; at any rate after his death his achievements did not prove to be lasting.

Several examples of boastful propaganda in favour of the king are found in Gupta and post-Gupta times. A remarkable example is the Allahabad inscription composed by the poet Harişeṇa, who recounts the all-round exploits of Samudra Gupta. It tells us that Samudra Gupta conquered numerous peoples and principalities, and even rulers of distant lands sent tributes to him. A similar claim is made about a king called Caṇḍra, who is identified with Candra Gupta II. He is said to have led his victorious arms as far as Bactria, which is identical with north Afghanistan. Again, in the sixth century AD a king called Yaśodharman of Malwa is credited by his panegyrist with the victory over the Hūṇas and with conquests wider than that of the Guptas. All these panegyrisms, composed to boost the morale of the kings and their soldiers, have to be taken with a grain of salt.

The best example of large-scale eulogy is the *Harşacarita* composed by Bāṇabhaṭṭa in the seventh century. Bāṇa speaks eloquently of the achievements of his patron Harşavardhana. From now onwards began the *carita* or semi-biographical literature relating to the princes. It highly exaggerates the attributes and achievements of the patrons. The court chroniclers of the early medieval age catalogued the conquests of their kings after the conventional *digvijayas* of ancient *cakravartin*, and the poet lent his hero the halo of a traditional all-conquering king.[1] Long inscriptions were composed to commemorate the victories. In an inscription the Pāla prince Dharmapāla, who ruled over Bengal and Bihar in the eighth century AD, claims to have conquered

[1]Pathak, op. cit., pp. 78-79.

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the whole country including the north-western part of India although there is not a shred of evidence to establish that his army went as distant as that. The metaphors and symbols contained in the literature could be intelligible only to the prince and his small elitist circle. But all the same from the early centuries of the Christian era onwards the kings employed and patronized a large number of poet eulogists who saw only the virtues and victories of their patrons and never noticed their foibles or failure. It will therefore appear that ancient India produced a good deal of literature which was intended to impress the people with the all-conquering and invincible power of the princes.

V. Propaganda of Superstition for Power and Money

If we believe Kauṭilya, the credulous beliefs of the people were cleverly exploited for promoting the interests of the state, internal as well as external. For augmenting the royal treasury the *Arthaśāstra* suggests several devices which play upon the superstitions of the people. On some nights the king may set up a god or a sacred shrine, or may point out an evil omen. Once the people are made aware of it and start making offerings then either for worshipping the god or for averting the calamity he may appropriate the collections raised in this manner. The king may declare the arrival of a god in the temple garden. A spy in the guise of a *rakṣasa* (demon) demanding a daily tribute of human beings may appear in the tree, and a false panic may be raised among the people that an evil spirit has appeared. Accordingly the people of the capital and countryside may be asked to contribute in order to ward off evil spirits.[1] At least some measures laid down by Kauṭilya were put into effect. Patañjali, who wrote a commentary on Pāṇini's grammar around 150 BC, states that the images set up by the Maurya kings brought them income on account of their sale and provided livelihood (*jivikā*) through the offerings made to them.

A serpent with several heads may be held up before the people, apparently to overawe them, and fees in cash (*hiraṇya*) may be collected from the spectators. A cobra may be rendered unconscious by diet, and credulous spectators may be asked to see it on payment of fee. Poisonous drink or water may be used to render the sceptics senseless, and their loss of sense may be attributed

[1]For details see Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*, V. 2.

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by the spies to the curse of gods. Similarly the spies may cause the condemner of the god to be bitten by a cobra and may spread the rumour that this was the consequence of the curse of the god. Further, people may be advised to take remedial measures against this ominous phenomenon, and accordingly collections may be raised for filling the treasury. Thus the people, rational or otherwise, are to be subjected to all kinds of rumours and propaganda to believe in the superstitious practices and to pay money to the government. All the devices mentioned above occur under the section 'replenishment of the treasury,'[1] which, according to Kauṭilya, is an important organ of the seven-element state.

Kauṭilya is very clear in his mind that religious formalities should not obstruct the acquisition of wealth. According to him desire for the other world (*paralokāpekṣā*), adherence to virtuous life (*dhārmikatvam*), and faith in the auspiciousness of days and stars (*maṅgalatithinakṣatreṣṭitvam*) hamper profit. In other words a person looking for wealth should not worry about these religious considerations. Kauṭilya clearly states that wealth will pass away from the childish man who enquires most after the stars. As he puts it: "wealth is the star for wealth; what will the stars do?"[2] Kauṭilya therefore is ready to dispense with religious customs whenever they stand in the way of the prince. He apparently wants to tell his ruler that religious practices are so many superstitions, which can be used so long as they serve royal interests.

Such a policy is recommended in dealing with the internal enemies of the state. It is provided that when a seditious person (*dūṣya*) is busy with sacrifice in a forest, fiery spies may murder him and carry away the corpse as that of an outcast. Moreover, a seditious person may be lured into purchasing rich offerings for the god. When he brings out his newly-acquired wealth for the purpose, he may be caught red-handed in the very act of the purchase and his whole property be confiscated. Hence Kauṭilya does not believe in the performance of sacrifice by the opponents of the state whom he regards as condemnable and irreligious.[3] On the contrary religious engagements of a seditious person are to be used for punishing him.

Kauṭilya recommends that the enemy may be manoeuvred into the performance of certain sacrifices by the spies of the king, who should

[1] *Arthaśāstra*, V, 2. [2] ibid., IX. 4. [3] ibid., V. 2.

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kill him when he is busy with the sacrifice. All this would require much persuasion and remonstration on the part of the spies. The king himself may perform expiatory rites to stay the imaginary calamity. His enemy may be asked to follow suit.[1] All these religious measures to destroy the enemy apparently involve skilful propaganda and persuasion.

For the success of invasion the invaded have to be convinced of the omniscience and divinity of the invader. The aggressor is asked to enthuse his subject and to terrify those of the enemy publicizing his omniscience and close association with the gods. Several artifices are to be contrived by the spies. Acting on the information fished out by the spies about the activities of the chief officers and seditious people the king should give out that he knows everything because of his supernatural power. He should claim knowledge of foreign affairs because of his power of reading omens, although in fact he gets it through a domestic pigeon.[2]

The methods for demonstrating the divine associations of the king are more numerous. The spies may suddenly appear as fire-gods in the midst of fire through an underground tunnel, and the king may talk to them. He can worship such spies when they rise up from water in the form of Nāgas. He may arrange to exhibit the miraculous phenomenon of the spontaneous outbreak of fire in water. He may sit on a raft in water, which is secretly but securely fastened by a rope to a rock. Lastly, he might perform some magic in the water to demonstrate his superhuman powers before the people.[3]

All these measures recommended by Kauṭilya involve a great deal of propaganda. He provides a host of publicity agents to disseminate belief in the divinity of the king. As many as seven classes of officials, astrologers, soothsayers, horologists, *paurāṇikas* (story-tellers), *īkṣaṇikas* (a type of astrologers), spies and *sācivyakaras* (companions of ministers) are to be pressed into the service of the state for the purpose. The first four are regarded as priests by Kauṭilya[4] which shows their important role in moulding public opinion. The priests are called upon to give wide publicity to the superhuman powers of the king throughout his territory. In foreign countries they are to spread the news of gods appearing before the king and of his having received from heaven the powers of the sword (*daṇḍa*) and purse (*kośa*). The subjects of the enemy are to be told that the invading king can inter-

[1] *Arthaśāstra*, XIII. 2. [2] For the whole paragraph see ibid., XIII. 1.
[3] ibid., XIII. 1. [4] ibid., V. 3.

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pret dreams and follow the language of beasts and birds, and hence his victory is assured. Moreover, by means of a firebrand and the noise of drums from the sky the subjects of the enemy are to be convinced of the impending defeat of their ruler.[1] Finally the images of gods may be damaged and blood may be caused to flow out in floods; spies may then represent this as a sign of the impending defeat of the enemy.[2]

These ingenious measures for propagating the supernatural powers of the aggressive ruler occur in the thirteenth book of the *Arthaśāstra*, which deals with the methods of capturing the capital (*durgalambhopāya*). Since they involve several magical stratagems, they reveal that their author does not believe in the genuineness of the royal divinity and omniscience nor does he want the ruler to subscribe to such nonsense. Nevertheless by skilful propaganda carried on by a well-organized machinery he wants to sell the all-knowing and divine character of the conqueror to his subjects, so that they could wholeheartedly support his aggressive designs and the subjects of the enemy might transfer their allegiance to him. These magical tricks, practices and pieces of propaganda are considered foreign to the *Arthaśāstra*,[3] which is supposed to represent the state of affairs in the Maurya period. These measures may have been inserted in the early centuries of the Christian era,or even later, but they certainly represent a school which believed in disseminating all kinds of superstition for the sake of the state.

VI. Communication between the King and his Subjects

We have some idea of how the ancient Indian princes communicated with their subjects. The earliest examples are the inscriptions of Aśoka in which royal orders are conveyed to the subjects. The subjects are told of the duties of administrative and judicial officers, employed to work among them in different capacities. The royal rescripts issued by Aśoka lay down not only administrative duties but also deal with society and religion. Through them Aśoka asks his subjects to pay respect to parents, brāhmaṇas, *śramaṇas* (monks), etc., and advises them to show mercy towards slaves and serfs. Apparently these instructions are intended to eliminate social tensions caused by

[1] *Arthaśāstra*, XIII. 1. [2] ibid., XIII. 2.
[3] H.C. Seth, 'The Spurious in Kauṭilya's *AŚ*,' *A Volume of Eastern and Indian Studies presented to Professor F.W. Thomas*, 25.

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family feuds and conflict of class interests.

From about the beginning of the Christian era onwards the orders of the kings regarding land grants were communicated to the subjects through charters engraved mainly on copper plates and occasionally on stone. The charters called *śāsana* or *rājaśāsana* transferred plots of land and villages with all their taxes to priests and other beneficiaries. Because the transfer was considered to be a very important matter affecting many people the charter was addressed to all the concerned parties who had even the remotest connection with the land or the village. A whole hierarchy of officials ranging from ministers to royal retainers was informed of the grant. All village elders as well as all the castes from the brāhmaṇas to the caṇḍālas were informed of these land transactions. The list of the addressees ended with the use of the term *ādi* or etc., which covered those people who were not specified in the list of the addressees. This was apparently done to announce the new land titles to the people and to avoid disputes and litigations relating to lands and villages in future. We can visualize that the charters written in Sanskrit could not be intelligible to most people living in the villages. It is likely that their contents were announced by beat of drums by the agents of the king. The operative part of the early medieval charters was composed in the regional language and the conventional preliminaries in Sanskrit. Of course copper-plate charters were handed over to the beneficiaries as proofs of title to revenues of villages or to plots of land and their copies deposited in the royal archives. But charters recorded on stone, especially on temple walls, could be read by the more educated sections of people, who learnt not only about the munificence of the princes and others but also imbibed the virtues of making religious gifts.

In what ways the subjects communicated with the king and brought their grievances to his notice is not known to us. The ordinary people would not have the means to get their statements recorded on stone and copper as the princes did. However many votive inscriptions commemorate the big and small donations made by merchants and artisans in favour of some religious cause. The demands or the grievances of the people living in the towns and villages may have been brought to the attention of the king through a hierarchy of officials. If administrative oppression proved to be intolerable, the people could rebel and represent, and they attracted royal notice as happened in Taxila whose governor was recalled by the Maurya king on the repre-

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sentation of the local people. But such cases may have been rare. The *Harşacarita* states that in course of the military march of Harşa villagers lodged false complaints against the oppressions of the *bhogapatis*[1] who were in the nature of powerful overlords enjoying the revenues of the villages granted to them or placed under their charge by the king. Although these complaints are dismissed as false in this case, which might indicate the manipulation of the officials against the common people, it is likely that the subjects took advantage of the royal marches to air their grievances before the king in public.

VII. Preserving the Social Structure

For a long time the Indian social order was based on a system in which the brāhmaṇas prayed, the kṣatriyas fought, the vaiśyas produced and the śūdras served all the three. The mythical justification for such an order first appears in an interpolated portion of the *Ṛgveda*, which states that the brāhmaṇas issued out of the head of the god, the kṣatriyas out of his shoulders, the vaiśyas out of his thighs, and the śūdras out of his feet. This myth is repeated in all the important subsequent texts, which deal with the functions of the four varṇas. So deeply has it been entrenched in the Hindu mind that even now some brāhmaṇas, though poor and illiterate, insist that the śūdras occupy the lowest position in society because they are born of the feet of the god.

The four-fold varṇa system being the bedrock of the whole social order, all the ancient law-books stress that the chief function of the head of the state is its maintenance. The *Śānti Parva* declares that people can perform the duties pertaining to their castes and social orders only if the state power backs them. The lawgiver Manu proclaims that the kingdom can prosper so long as the purity of caste is maintained. If the bastard people of the mixed castes sully the state, it shall perish together with its inhabitants. Manu can hardly think of the royal functions separate from the caste system. As Hopkins puts it; "Incidental mention of the king standing without particular relation to the other castes can only be sparingly quoted." According to brahmaṇical authorities if anybody deflects from his caste functions it leads to calamity. Nārada, a lawgiver of the fifth-sixth centuries AD, states that if the king does not punish any caste when they have left the path the created beings of the world will perish.

[1] *Harşacarita*, 212.

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The need to uphold the social order by the royal authority is corroborated by epigraphic evidence. A Sātavāhana brāhmaṇa ruler in the middle of the second century is represented as hostile to the kṣatriyas but a preventer of confusion in the four-fold varṇa system. Similar statements appear in inscriptions of the Gupta age. Several rulers of Central India are represented as devoted to the establishment of the *varṇāśrama dharma*. Many Gupta kings and their successors are described in their inscriptions as busy settling the systems of *varṇas* and *āśramas* and in keeping the castes confined to their respective spheres of duty. Harṣa's father is called a regulator of the system of orders and stages. Thus in both literature and inscriptions the preservation of the varṇa-divided society was repeatedly emphasized as the main function of the king.

The duties pertaining to the varṇa are widely propagated by the celebrated Indian work *Bhagavad Gītā*. When Arjuna wavers in taking up arms against his kinsmen, Kṛṣṇa, who is considered to be the incarnation of a god, advises Arjuna to carry out the functions of a kṣatriya, namely to fight. It is typical of this text that it advises members of all the four orders to perform their duties without any hope for rewards in this world. In other words, it asks the people to resign themselves to the existing situation. The weaker sections of society such as the vaiśyas, śūdras and women are told to repose their faith in Kṛṣṇa so that they may attain heaven in the next world. Evidently the social order faced a grave crisis in the third-fourth centuries, as the description of the Kali age suggests. Hence vigorous propaganda sould meet the situation.

Since the texts which stress the importance of the varṇa system were written by the brāhmaṇas it is natural that they accord the highest rank to the brāhmaṇas. In particular the law-books of Manu and Nārada assign a number of privileges to the brāhmaṇas. Crimes committed by the brāhmaṇas were to be ignored, but those committed against them by members of the lower castes were to be severely punished. The brāhmaṇas extolled the virtues of visiting the places of pilgrimage because the offerings made by the pilgrims brought them great income. The brāhmaṇas further highlighted the spiritual merits accruing from making charities, especially in making land grants. Most land grants recorded on copper plates charters were made to the brāhmaṇas. For this reason the sections called *bhūmidāna-praśaṃsā* or glorifications of land grants occur in various texts. Similarly the brāh-

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maṇas also underlined the religious merits of regularly listening to the epics and the *Purāṇas*, whose recitation brought them rich gifts (*dakṣiṇas*) at the end of this function. The brāhmaṇas also propagated the religious merits of the Gaṅgā bath and various other day-to-day rituals. All these acts were accompanied by payment of gifts to the priests, who stood ritually at the head of the social order. The common people had to make two kinds of payment, taxes to the state and gifts to the brāhmaṇas. In case of failure to pay taxes the state could use force against them. But the payment of gifts to the priests depended entirely on the powerful propaganda regarding the merits of gift-making which came to be backed by a strong social sanction.

Theoretically the system of the four *varṇas* continued to serve as a model, but there appeared numerous mixed castes. They number about sixty in Manu, become about one hundred in post-Gupta times, and in the census of 1901 as many as two thousand sub-castes of brāhmaṇas alone are mentioned. Stagnant social economy, lack of mobility and the process of absorbing numerous tribal peoples and foreign immigrants and invaders into the pale of the Hindu society account for the caste proliferation. But according to the old theory propounded in the *Ṛgveda* there were only four original *varṇas*. Therefore in order to justify the absorption and creation of numerous castes in subsequent times the brāhmaṇas cleverly invented the theory of the mixed castes. They pointed out that the intermingling of these four *varṇas* with one another produced numerous mixed castes. Different law-books attribute the origin of the same caste to different intermingling. Such inconsistencies did not worry the compilers so long as it appeared to fit with their original theory of the origin of the four *varṇas*. Undoubtedly explanations for the origins of the so-called mixed castes were figments of imagination meant for propaganda and caste validation. The advent of the Śakas, Pahlavas, Ionian Greeks or Yavanas or other peoples in India in post-Maurya times was explained by a legend given in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. According to it since Viśvāmitra coveted the cow of Vasiṣṭha, these peoples originated from that wonderworking cow to destroy Viśvāmitra and his soldiers. So the process of systematizing the *varṇas* which started in post-Vedic times is found in several legends recorded in the law-books, *Purāṇas*, inscriptions and historical novels of the medieval age.

Buddhism, Jainism and several brāhmaṇical sects emphasized the

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sanctity of family and property. Numerous Sanskrit verses place wife and property in the same category and prescribe their protection at every cost. They demand unfailing chastity and fidelity on the part of wife and repeatedly recommend the preservation of patriarchal family and private property. This is prescribed as one of the chief duties of the king in the Buddhist and brāhmaṇical sources. The king is asked to punish the thief and adulterers. He is even asked to restore to the subject the stolen wealth at any cost. Popular notion identified royal duty with the protection and probably even with the distribution of wealth, the latter function being a remnant of the duties of the tribal chief who used to distribute the gifts, tributes and shares received from his tribesmen and others. This can be inferred from a passage of the *Pañcatantra*, which contains stories that were widely read in ancient India and later translated into most of the important languages of the world. Further, the king is asked to always honour his rich subjects because in every kingdom the wealthy constitute an estate. Manu enumerates eighteen offences, out of which ten are connected with property and two with family. Similarly Kātyāyana lists ten wrongs deserving attention by the king; out of them five relate to property and two to family. Many texts state that poverty lies at the root of all the evils and the poor are full of vices. According to Kāmandaka men are inherently subject to passion and covet one another's wealth and wife. So many ancient texts underline the need of protecting family and property. The dominant ideal propagated for the king in ancient India was the attainment of *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*. *Artha* means the enjoyment of property, *kāma* the enjoyment of family life, and *dharma* the maintenance of the legal system. The *trivarga* ideal therefore was dominated by the concepts of property, family and caste. Several *subhāṣitas* such as the *Cāṇakya Nīti* and others contained numerous morals and instructions which aimed at promoting social stability. Written word was therefore cleverly propagated and manipulated by the educated priestly class to maintain not only their own ritual primacy in society but to perserve the social structure based on the *varṇas*, and patriarchal family and property.

Floating folk-tales, fables and traditions passing from mouth to mouth and generation to generation provided wisdom, entertainment and promoted social stability. They constituted a kind of community literature, which was gradually written down and preserved for posterity. This seems to have been the case with the Buddhist birth stories

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called the Jātakas, and other varieties of stories embodied in the *Pañcatantra* and the *Bṛhatkathā* of Guṇāḍhya which was later elaborated into the *Kathāsaritsāgara* by Somadeva. Many stories clearly carry the moral at the end. They applaud truthfulness, obedience to parents, observance of the *varṇadharma* and similar other virtues consistent with the maintenance of the Hindu society. In other stories the moral is implicit, and can be drawn by an intelligent reader or listener.

In a society with very limited literacy the number of readers would be too small and that of listeners too large. In order to entertain the masses of the people and to instil social values in them the folk-tale tradition was developed into the *kathā* system. Certain Purāṇas, especially the Vaiṣṇavite *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* which is supposed to confer great religious merit on those who organize its recitation and listen to it, were regularly recited. Bhāgavataghars played an important part in imparting social and religious values to people in medieval Orissa. So strong has been the tradition that the recitation of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* by priests continues even to this day in India. Especially women devotees listen to it devoutly, and the reciters are generously rewarded. Till recently chiefs and nobles employed reciters called *vyāsa*.

VIII. Communication and Between Social Groups

We have some indication of how members of the various social orders communicated with one another. The early Pāli texts show how the Buddha took his message to the various classes of the people. The forms of addresses and greetings used in them by persons of different groups[1] suggest that in the social sphere the brāhmaṇas successfully maintained their hostile equality with the Buddha and that they were ritually superior although politically subservient to the ruling kṣatriyas. Here we do not notice any correspondence between ritual status and political status. The modes of addresses and greetings reveal that the Buddha and his monks cultivated close social intercourse mostly with the brāhmaṇas, at least in the early stage. But the lay followers who communicated with the Buddha were mostly artisans and merchants. Princely patrons of the Buddhist order were rich and influential, but artisans and merchants provided it with the mass support.

In the early brāhmaṇical texts the śūdras are addressed not on a

[1]N.K. Wagle, *Society at the Time of the Buddha* (Bombay, 1966), 156.

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footing of equality because they occupy a low position. The ancient dramas indicate the type of language and communication used by ancient Indians. The higher class people spoke Sanskrit while women and lower classes invariably spoke Prākrit. This would suggest lack of sufficient communication between the weaker sections of society on the one hand and the stronger sections on the other.

The dialogue form, which first appears in the Vedic texts, was adopted in the epics, the Purāṇas and the *Gītā*. But the role of the question master was not so important as in the works of Plato. The questions were very short and did not pursue the arguments at length. The answer came in the form of a long narrative, as we find in the *Mahābhārata* at many places, and once it was given the questioner felt satisfied.

The epics and Purāṇas seem to have been floating traditions, which were recited in the courts of princes by the panegyrists called *cāraṇas*, *māgadhas*, *sūtas*, *bandīs*, *bhāṭas*, etc. The *sūtas* and others played an important part in the dialogue, and orally reproduced both questions and answers. In course of time these versified accounts were written and transmitted from generation to generation with continuous additions and interpolations. In Pargiter's view the traditions compiled in the Purāṇas represent the kṣatriya version of events in contrast to the Vedic literature and the Dharmaśāstras which represent the priestly version. But this distinction does not seem to be very sound. Whatever may have been the character of the original Purāṇic traditions, they were certainly brāhmaṇized in course of time and were used by the priests for elevating and validating the position of the kṣatriya patrons in return for which handsome rewards were given.

The epics and Purāṇas contributed much to the normal functioning of society. Women and śūdras were entitled to listen to them but not to the Vedas. The verse in which the epics and the Purāṇas were written was very popular, and its style easy. These texts were generally compiled under Śaivite and Vaiṣṇavite influence. While the Śaivite Purāṇas glorify the religious merits flowing from the worship of Śiva, the Vaiṣṇavite Purāṇas do the same in regard to the worship of Viṣṇu. Replete with contradictory customs and statements, the epics and the Purāṇas really teach the virtues of patriarchal family life and the functions of the four social orders and life-stages. The *Rāmāyaṇa* idealizes the family life, in which regardless of consequences the son obeys his father, the younger brother the elder brother, and the wife

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her husband. Several stories of *sati* in the epics and the Purāṇas dwell upon the virtues of faithfully following the husbands under all conditions.

Astrology and divination[1] played an important part in the field of communication between the priests and the common people. To convince the people of their power to forecast the future priests recorded the events in the Purāṇas in the future tense. The original Purāṇas do not go beyond the Gupta period, but their tradition has been kept alive till recent times. An interpolation in the *Bhaviṣyat Purāṇa* states that Queen Victoria would rule in future.

Chapters on astrology are found in many Purāṇas. The epics and the Purāṇas popularized astrological ideas and practices which touched the life of the common people. The *Mahābhārata* taught that hating and opposing brāhmaṇas, seizing their wealth, wishing to kill or harm them, taking delight in their condemnation, disliking their praise, ignoring them in rituals, and getting angry with them and committing mistakes are the eight indications of a man's approaching fall. By predicting bad days for those who dare to defy the brāhmaṇas this astrological formulation tried to ensure the supremacy of the priestly order.

Many astrological practices were borrowed from primitive peoples right from Vedic times onwards. They were refined and elaborated to serve the cause of the brāhmaṇical order. The fact that all segments of society, right from the prince to the peasant and from the brāhmaṇa to the śūdra, believed in these superstitions, provided an ideological cementing bond. Since it was preached that everybody would be rewarded according to his fate there was no cause for grumble. It served as a good device to contain class conflicts and social tensions. The success of heredity and the failure of industry did not bother the people because this was all ordained by god. Hence propaganda through astrology was a strong device to keep the whole society together.

Astrologers extended solid support to political authority. They proclaimed the divinity of the king in battles and held out prospects of sure victory to his soldiers. For the start of his conquests Harṣa's astrologers fixed such an auspicious day and *lagna* as would ensure his victory in all the four quarters. They could prevent political upheavals and popular commotions by predicting evil consequences for

[1]ch. VIII deals with this subject.

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their sponsors. They also checked thefts by their occult ability for tracking the culprits. So because of their preachings and predictions astrologers could prove to be as effective and serviceable as police and soldiers.

The propagation of belief in the idea of rebirth and in the concepts of hell and heaven was an important element in the works of the brāhmaṇical writers. The Buddhists taught that by following their doctrines a person could attain *nirvāṇa* or liberation from the chain of birth and death. But the brāhmaṇical texts spoke of birth in higher orders and affluent families if a person faithfully observed the various kinds of *dharma* (assigned functions) such as *rāja-dharma* (royal duties), *varṇa-dharma* (order duties), *jāti-dharma* (caste duties), *pitṛ-dharma* (father's duties), *putra-dharma* (son's duties), *strī-dharma* (wife's duties), *pati-dharma* (husband's duties), *dāsa-dharma* (slave or servant's duties), and similar other *dharmas*. This point repeatedly occurs in the epics, Purāṇas. law-books and other texts, and was successfully driven home to the Hindus through constant propaganda, oral and written. Even now we come across people who ascribe all their miseries to their tioacns in a previous life.

Not less effective seems to have been the propaganda regarding belief in hell and heaven. The imprecations given at the end of all land charters granted to priests and temples warn the royal successors, officials and others that if they violate these grants, seize or disturb them, they are sure to be afflicted with appalling sins and miseries in hell. The picture of hell drawn in literary texts and inscriptions is an extension by analogy of the miseries which people suffer in this world, but a fertile imagination makes them extremely lurid and horrifying. In sharp contrast to this the heaven appears as a place of perpetual bliss and comfort. Those who perform the duties assigned to them within the framework of the brāhmaṇical social order are assured of admission to the heaven on their death. The Hindu belief in heaven and hell is meant to keep people attached to the functions of the order in which they are born.

IX. Propaganda for Moral and Social Changes

Although much that we have in the form of communication and propaganda was directed towards preserving the social order, occasionally propaganda was also made an instrument of social change. Some social and religious movements produced considerable litera-

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ture, which was aimed at transforming the values and the attitudes of the people. This can specially be said of Jainism and Buddhism, which did not recognize the existing varṇa system and attached much weight to the preservation of the cattle wealth. In order to take their doctrines to the common people the religious teachers adopted the language of the masses. Although Sanskrit had been in use in India from Vedic times onwards, the religious sects that arose in the post-Vedic period did not use this language in which various kinds of *sūtras* were being compiled since the fifth century BC. On the other hand the Jains and Buddhists preferred to adopt the popular languages spoken and understood by the people. The Buddhists adopted Māgadhī later called Pāli, which was understood in north-eastern India, and compiled all their canons and teachings in it. Similarly the Jainas adopted Prākrit, which was widely used by Aśoka. The Buddhists composed a good deal of popular literature to propagate their social, moral and religious values. An important genre of this literature comprises the Jātakas or the Buddhist birth-stories, which are about 550 in number. Every Buddhist birth-story consists of three parts: the present story, the past story and the moral. In the first part some complaint involving moral or social lapses on the part of a particular individual is made to the Buddha; in the second the Master narrates some past story relating to his own previous birth and that of the individual concerned in which the latter is said to have behaved in the same manner in a previous birth; and finally from the past story some kind of moral consistent with the Buddhist teachings is drawn. In the nineteenth century when the Hindu reformers wanted to abolish *sati* and child marriage and introduce widow marriage they quoted many Sanskrit texts to prove that the first two practices were not prevalent in ancient times while the third was. Pamphlets were written on this basis and speeches were made in conferences and meetings for social reform accordingly. Centuries earlier practically the same method had been adopted by the Buddhists to sell their moral and social ideas by invoking past precedents. The past storieswere evidently meant to illumine and illustrate the Buddhist moral maxims.

In the early centuries of the Christian era the Buddhists compiled a large body of the *avadāna* literature of the Mahāyāna form in order to advertise the miraculous activities of the Buddha in various roles. This was obviously done to prove the superiority of the Buddha over other religious teachers. Further, this literature was composed to pre-

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pare the ground for an important change in Buddhism. It encouraged the worship of the Buddha, against his own wishes. It asserted that Gautama Buddha can be born only in a brāhmaṇa or a kṣatriya family, which naturally gave weightage to the first two orders in contrast to the two lower orders. Buddhism was now gradually falling in line with the brāhmaṇical social order, which laid accent on the joint supremacy of the first two orders from post-Maurya times onwards. Early Buddhism denounced the existing *varṇa* system, which won it the support of artisans and merchants. The early Pāli texts refer to many disputations of the Buddha with Ambaṣṭha and other brāhmaṇas in which he tried to expose the hollowness of their claims to superiority based on high birth and hereditary status. The Buddha tried to convince them that caste status depended not on the birth of a person but on his worth.

The early Buddhist texts preached non-injury to animals, because the use of the iron ploughshare in the middle Gangetic plains needed more and more oxen. Cattle wealth was being destroyed senselessly by the brāhmaṇas in numerous Vedic sacrifices and also by the aboriginal tribal people, who domesticated cattle not for the sake of dairy products but for providing beef for themselves. Without doubt the preservation of cattle was of the utmost importance to agriculture. Therefore the earliest Buddhist text called the *Suttanipāta* describes the cattle as producers of food, beauty and happiness, holds them responsible for the origin of plants, and recommends their preservation under all conditions. The accent on non-injury to animals first laid by the Buddhists was gradually written into the brāhmaṇical texts, and since the beginning of the early centuries of the Christian era the brāhmaṇas made the protection of the cow an article of faith. In course of time this idea struck such deep roots among the Hindus that now even uneconomic cattle have to be fed. Along with this there also developed the creed of vegetarianism, which was particularly propagated by the Vaiṣṇavites in their texts. Most Vaiṣṇavites continue to be vegetarians even in modern times although those in Bengal take fish.

When Buddhism and other sects tried to preach new ideas they came into conflict with the rival, traditional sects which stoutly resisted the onslaughts on their positions. So in the religious texts composed by the Buddhists and the orthodox brāhmaṇical people we find a strong vilification of each other. The rival sects are presented

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in a very bad light and associated with all possible vices and evil practices. No text compiled by the Ājīvikas, who preached materialism, has been known or recovered so far, but we get many references to their denunciation by their rivals. So considerable is the literature of vilification that all uncomplimentary remarks have been carefully collected, sifted and utilized to prepare a connected history of the Ājīvikas.[1]

The practice of maligning and denouncing rival sects seems to have been widely prevalent in the time of Aśoka. This may be the reason why in one of his inscriptions the Maurya emperor teaches the followers of different religions the value of tolerance and synthesis, and advises them not to vilify and condemn one another. He asks them not to glorify one's own faith at the cost of another's. This instruction may have worked in his lifetime, but a few centuries after his death the whole career of Aśoka is dismissed in a single verse in the Purāṇas which call him a foolish (*mohātmā*) king.

X. Crafts, Commerce and Communication

Social change can be promoted by religious preaching, but in many cases it is brought about by technological developments. Although the same craft may originate independently and fortuitously at different places, technological devices generally spread from some epicentre. Crafts having their origin at one place travel to another as a result of military conquest or peaceful, mostly commercial, contacts between peoples. The ancient Indians practised numerous crafts, especially iron-working and the manufacture of steel. By the fifth century BC iron technology had reached a high peak of excellence, and it gradually spread to different parts of the country. We cannot say whether propaganda played any part in it. We have polished Maurya pillars, glossy North Black Polished ware, many objects of beautiful craftsmanship in glass and ivory, and the Mehrauli iron pillar which has not gathered rust even in the last fifteen centuries, but how these articles were made is nowhere indicated in the texts. The section on metallurgy in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya is not very detailed. Eighteen crafts are mentioned in early Pāli texts, and as many as sixty-four types of arts and crafts are enumerated in the literary texts, but the processes involved in their practice are nowhere itemised.

[1] A.L. Basham, *History and Doctrines of the Ājīvikas*, (London, 1951).

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Obviously crafts were transmitted orally from father to son or from the master craftsman to his apprentices. Where craft is hereditary, in many ways it comes naturally to family members. Imitation in the handling and making of tools and weapons may have been supplemented by oral instructions. Much of the craft skill may have been diffused and transmitted from one region to another through sheer imitation. No conscious propaganda seems to have been made in favour of any new technology. Most written texts on technology relate to the *Śilpaśāstras* in early medieval times, and deal mainly with architecture, sculpture and iconography which would be generally patronised by men of upper classes. By and large, we notice a divorce between technology and literacy; we get rich theological and priestly literature taught and transmitted by different schools, but very little of technological literature meant for common craftsmen. As a literate and educated class the priests wrote down the rituals and religious formulas they followed. On the contrary artisans and craftsmen, who generally belonged to śūdra and vaiśya castes, lacked literacy and hence could not record the methods they followed in pursuing their various crafts.[1]

Although in some texts different parts of the country are called famous for various products and commodities, we find no evidence of any sale promotion activity. We do not come across any promotional propaganda for the sale of goods. However language was not a serious barrier in India's foreign trade. Peninsular India carried on thriving trade with the Romans, who came in fine ships protected by archers against pirates. Impressed by the discipline of the archers the Tamil kings employed Roman soldiers as their bodyguards. These Romans are described as dumb, for they could speak to the people of the Tamil land only by gestures. But since the Romans had stationed two regiments in the Cera country to protect their interests and had also settled down at Arikamedu and Kaveripattanam, which had a quarter for foreign merchants, evidently they had learnt the local Indian language, particularly Tamil.

Commercial intercourse introduced many Tamil words into Greek

[1]This also seems to have been true of the knowledge of herbs and drugs which were known to illiterate village priests and physicians. Out of their anxiety to retain monopoly over this knowledge they maintained secrecy. This knowledge was neither recorded nor imparted orally to people outside the family, and much of it perished in the long run.

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and Latin. The Hebrew word for peacock is a Tamil word, and the English *pea* can be traced through Latin and Greek to the same source. In Greek we find Tamil words for rice, ginger, cinnamon and several other articles, which were exported from India. The Hellenistic Greeks of Egypt learnt Tamil to such an extent that a few Tamil passages are found in a Greek papyrus record in Egypt. When Egypt became a Roman province, and the monsoons were discovered about the end of the first century BC,[1] the commercial and consequently linguistic intercourse became frequent. About the beginning of the Christian era a Pāṇḍyan king sent embassies to the Roman emperor Augustus, which shows that the Romans and Indians could converse with one another. The presence of the colonies of the Roman merchants in the sea-coasts of south India suggests that their position was regulated by diplomatic agreements written in the language understood by both the parties.

The Indians also carried on trade with South-East Asia in the early centuries of the Christian era and later. Sanskrit thus influenced the languages of South-East Asia. The *bahasa* Indonesia contains numerous Sanskrit words. On the other hand people from south India seem to have acquainted themselves with the indigenous languages of South-East Asia. The languages of south India contain several words which can be derived neither from the Dravidian nor from the Indo-Aryan stock. They are of South-East Asian origin and stand for articles and products which were obtained by the Indians from that region.

Concluding Remarks

It will be seen that it is very difficult to present a coherent and connected account of propaganda and communication in ancient India. But what has been stated above is sufficient to show that the existing modes of communication played an important part not only in preserving the social order but also in upholding political authority. In spite of anonymity written texts carried great authority, and the priests who purveyed them enjoyed enormous social prestige and influence. A good deal of literature was produced in defence of the four social classes, private property and patriarchal family. The original texts were inflated, conveniently interpreted and subjected to interpolations to suit the exigencies of time, place and circumstances.

[1]The usually known date for this discovery is AD 48, but several finds of the Roman coins of earlier times suggest an earlier date.

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Maintenance of the existing social institutions was regarded as the chief function of the king, whose power was buttressed by the deliberate adoption of superstitious practices and the propagation of the divinity of kingship. The folk-tales and myths similarly aim at preserving the existing social order and preaching moral values. Myths served as charters not only for the enforcement of social norms but also for the distribution of social positions and privileges.

However some literature was also composed to make the moral and social changes acceptable to people. It sounded a note of dissent. This was especially done by the Jains and Buddhists, and to some extent by the Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas. In any case propaganda and communication were never used widely to bring about fundamental changes in the social order; on the other hand they were meant to contain social discontent. Communication was particularly weak in transmitting and diffusing craft skill and knowledge. Artisans were generally illiterate and secretive. It was neither possible to develop technology nor to preserve it for the posterity. But although advertisement techniques were not known and there was the additional difficulty of communicating with peoples from across the seas, India's diplomatic and commercial contacts with foreign lands were by no means meagre.

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CHAPTER VIII

An Approach to Astrology and Divination in Early Mediaeval Times

LOVE for astrology is not a peculiar trait of the Indian character because soothsaying is widely prevalent in all ancient and mediaeval societies. The Chinese practice of reading the oracle bones is well known, and so are several Babylonian practices. What distinguishes India is the survival of the demand for divination to a large degree. It is popular not only with peasants but also with the urban population. For those who wish to study the impact of astrological practices on mediaeval society in the West the present-day India is a fruitful field for actual observation and comparison. The Indian peasant makes use of astrology on all important occasions in his life. Astrologers are consulted about the auspiciousness of the occasion meant for marriage, journey, ploughing, sowing, harvesting, building houses, etc. In addition to this their advice is sought in starting new enterprises such as trade, investment, etc., and for selecting the site for buildings.

Divination in the villages is practised by a class of preliterate priests who generally belong to the so-called lower castes. They are supposed to be the special devotees of mother goddesses, who reveal to them certain mystical forces on the strength of which these priests foretell the future of the individuals who approach them. The individuals ask whether they will be free of sickness, whether they will be blessed with children, and similar other questions. The diviners mostly give the replies in the positive and also recommend certain conditions which their clients have to carry out if they wish to fulfil their desires. Some diviners, when in a state of trance, also shower blessings, which are asked for by the devotees. An extremely useful function performed by these unlettered diviners is the location of underground sources of water for digging wells and tanks. In the Bihar famine of 1967 some aboriginal diviners helped the engineers in discovering subterranean water in the district of Palamau. Sometimes these non-brāhmaṇa priests also assist in detecting thieves by means of magical spells and ceremonies. Moreover, every village has its literate brāhmaṇa

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astrologer, who is called in and sought out especially by women to indicate the exact dates of seasonal festivals which occur frequently every month (*māsa-kṛtya*) but whose timings keep on varying because of the lunar calendar. The literate astrologer is also asked to prepare the horoscopes of newly born babies which are compared at the time of match-making among members of the upper castes. From their childhood the Hindus grow up in an astrological climate, their minds filled up with long lists of auspicious and inauspicious signs and sights. All this will create the impression that astrology and divination are practised in India far more widely than they are done in the western countries.

A historian would naturally like to know the circumstances that gave rise to such practices. The general conditions which foster belief in fate and fatalism have not been typical of India. Conditions of drought, flood, rains, famine, etc., prove that man proposes and God disposes. Once the people came to believe in fate they were faced with the problem of revealing it. There is no indication of the practice of divination in early Vedic literature. The *Atharvaveda*, which is regarded to be a pre-Aryan text in contents, contains many ritual ceremonies for warding off evils and diseases but does not seem to have recommended divination. Towards the close of the Vedic period a few references in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* and *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* speak of the consequences of some dreams.[1] But on the whole omens and portents in the Vedic texts do not appear to be many and formidable.

The belief in fate was fostered not by the brāhmaṇas in the initial stage but by some heretical sects such as that of the Ājīvikas, who propagated that the destiny of the human being was fixed and predetermined, and that what had been ordained could not be overcome by the free will and the action of the human agents.[2] These sects also suggested some methods for foretelling the future. Dreams and omens came to be interpreted as indicating future developments. In particular the physical traits associated with great men are frequently mentioned in Buddhist and Jain writings, and were adopted by brāhmaṇical texts also. Even some early brāhmaṇical works such as the Gṛhyasūtras of the 5th-3rd centuries BC attribute some omens to a good bride. From early times onwards certain bodily characteristics as

[1]Extracts quoted in P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, III (Poona, 1946), 227, fn. 305.

[2]A. L. Basham, *History and Doctrines of the Ājīvikas* (London, 1951), ch. XII.

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signs of future well being and prosperity came to be assigned to both animals and human beings. This may have been derived from the observation of correspondenccs and coincidences between physical features on the one hand and good luck and worldly success on the other, but we have no means to substantiate this. In any case this did not lead to the early development of palmistry, one of the earliest treatments of which is found in the Garuḍa Purāṇa,[1] a work of about the 12th century.

The characteristic Indian contribution to astrology was marked by prophecies based on the study of the position of the planets and stars. But perhaps it was not common in India before Kauṭilya, who was sceptical of this practice. Kauṭilya states that wealth is the star for wealth and implies that the stars will not help if the man does not work. Evidently he does not put faith in the efficacy of prophecies based on the movement of stars.

Earlier texts produced in the first four centuries of the Christian era have more of astronomy, evidently under Greek influence, but the Greeks seem to have also contributed to belief in the influence of the stars on human life. Under Hellenic shadow the Indians came to develop the system of horoscope although they did not base this on numerology, the effect of numbers on human life, as the Greeks did it. Gradually birth stars came to be seen as guiding and determining the life of a person. Even the duration of a disease came to be connected by the medical texts with the planet under which it started. However, all such ideas remained confined to literate members of higher castes.

From Gupta times onwards astrology emerged as an important factor in the mental life of the people. The lawgiver Yājñavalkya ascribes the rise and fall of kings to planets and therefore recommends their worship.[2] The brāhmaṇical priests recorded the events in the Purāṇas in future tense. The evident objective was to impress the people with their power of forecasting the future of the various ruling dynasties, though all this was written after the dynasties had run their course. The original Purāṇas do not appear before the Gupta period, but their tradition has been kept alive till recent times. Mention may be made of the prophecy regarding several effects of the British rule in some Purāṇas.

[1] Bombay, Śaka Saṃvat 1828, chapters 63-65.

[2] *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* with the Mitākṣarā, ed. S.S. Setlur (Madras, 1912), I. 307.

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In ancient times some enlightened persons such as Kauṭilya questioned the usefulness of consulting the stars, but in early medieval times the study of astrology was deliberately cultivated and encouraged. The first important work on astrology was the *Bṛhat Saṃhitā* of Varāhamihira[1] written in the 7th century AD. It discusses in detail the effects of the positions and movements of stars and planets on the fortunes of various sections of societies as well as on crops, trade, commerce, etc.

Astrology covers a good position in many Purāṇas, which were meant for the instruction of women and lower orders, in other words for the illiterate masses which accounted for the overwhelming majority of the population. The *Matsya Purāṇa*[2] and the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*,[3] ascribable to the 7th-8th centuries, contain considerable stuff on astrology.

The epics and the Purāṇas popularised astrological ideas and practices which touched the life of the common people.[4] These ideas were obviously determined by the dominant social values. The *Udyoga Parva*[5] instruction quoted by late mediaeval texts makes this clear. According to it hating and opposing brāhmaṇas, seizing their wealth, desire to kill or harm them, taking delight in condemning them, disliking their praise, not remembering them in rituals, and getting angry when they make mistakes are the eight indications (*purvanimittāni*) of a man's approaching fall. This astrological formulation is intended to insure the supremacy of the priestly order in society by predicting bad days for those who dare to defy the brāhmaṇas.

The Purāṇas appear to have been the first to speak of auspicious and inauspicious sights for the journey. The sight of a caṇḍāla, who occupies the lowest rung in the social scale, is considered to be inauspicious; on the other hand the sight of a courtesan, who does not have a high social status, is thought to be auspicious. But her appearance might betoken some prosperous princely court or town where the brāhmaṇa, the author of these devices, might find ready refuge and patronage. We can think of varied anthropological and sociological explanations for many auspicious or unauspicious signs,

[1]With the commentary of Bhaṭṭotpala, ed. Sudhākara Dvivedī (Banaras, 1895-1897).

[2]Bombay, Śaka Saṃvat 1845. [3]ibid., Śaka Saṃvat 1834.

[4]The role of astrologers in communication is briefly shown in ch. VII.

[5]Critical edn. (Poona, 1940), 33. 75-77.

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but this constitutes a subject by itself. Although most of these signs were invented or adopted by the brāhmaṇas according to their own needs eventually they came to enjoy universal validity, and auspicious signs for journey did not differ according to caste, as was the case with many Dharmśāstra rules. Even portents prescribed for royal journey, as in chapter 243 of the *Matsya Purāṇa*, came to be applied to lesser sections of society. Astrology thus weakened caste barriers.

The *Agni Purāṇa*,[1] a work of the 10th-11th centuries, embodies the largest number of chapters on astrology. Like the *Matsya Purāṇa*[2] it has a whole chapter on the interpretation of dreams,[3] and it provides four chapters[4] on omens and sights auspicious for starting on journey. But its most interesting feature is the prominence of astrological postulates for success in war; as many as twenty-two chapters deal with the topic.[5] War astrology, noticeable in the *Viṣṇudharmottara*, and in the *Harṣacarita* in which Bāṇa enumerates as many as twenty bad portents happening to the enemies of Harṣa, as a result of the start of his expedition,[6] is developed as a separate subject in this text and is called *yuddhajayarṇaviyajyotiḥśāstra*. Astrologers appear as great morale boosters who propagate the invincibility of their princely patrons on the battlefield. The new feature assumes importance in the context of numerous petty states all struggling for survival on the eve of the Turkish conquest of northern India, and the charms and spells meant for success in war may have been eagerly seized by many princes.

But equally detailed charms and spells indicating the shape of the things to come in respect of agriculture and meant for peasants are laid down in the *Kṛṣi-Parāśara*,[7] an 11th century treatise on agriculture composed in eastern India. It mentions the auspicious occasions and rituals for the first driving of the plough[8] and for sowing.[9] According to it the sudden croaking of frogs, dancing of peacocks, coming out of ants with eggs, climbing of snakes on the top of trees

[1]3 volumes, ed. several hands, *Bibliotheca Indica* (Calcutta, 1870-1879).
[2]chapter 242. [3]chapter 228.
[4]chapters 229-232. [5]chapters 123-144.
[6]Vasudev Sharan Agrawal, *Harṣacarita: Ek Sāṃskṛtik Adhyayan* (Patna, 1964), 136-37.
[7]Ed. and tr. by G. P. Majumdar and S. C. Banerji, *Bibliotheca Indica* (Calcutta, 1960).
[8]verses 121-56. [9]verses 157-85.

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show that rainfall is imminent.[1] On the other hand mishaps befalling the oxen or different parts of the plough are considered bad portents leading to the death of the farmer, his wife, son and brother and to the failure of agriculture.[2] However, bellowing and passing urine on the part of the oxen are thought to be portents leading to a good yield.[3] These prognostications clearly demonstrate the importance of the plough and oxen to the agriculturist in the pre-industrial age. Any accident affecting these two was thought to be very grave in terms of the future of the farmer's family.

The widespread practice of astrology attracted the attention of Alberuni during the 11th century in a manner as it had never been in the case of any earlier foreign visitor. Alberuni attests the great importance of astrology in the life of the people and as such gives considerable space to it in his book. Other sources indicate that astrology and grammar were the two main subjects taught in mediaeval Sanskrit institutions. This tradition continues in indigenous Sanskrit education till today, and it is not without significance that in many parts of the country the largest number of Sanskrit manuscripts belongs to grammar, astrology and *tantra*, which again was nothing but a lower form of astrology. Astrological maxims and sayings have been transmitted from mouth to mouth, from generation to generation, among the rural folk of north-eastern India in their dialects, and some of them such as the maxims of Khanā, Dāk, Ghāgh and Bhadrī are now available in print; this may also be true of other parts of the country.

Under tantric influence the *Agni Purāṇa* provides spells for success in love, killing, controlling stupefying and maddening others and also for breaking friendships.[4] These practices are now fast disappearing, but tantric rituals meant for averting the evil portents or the effects of planets called *graha-śānti* are prevalent even now in north-eastern India and other parts of the country. These rites seem to have originated independently of *tantra* for Gautama, a lawgiver of the pre-Christian era, prescribes propitiatory rites.[5] They got mixed up with tantric practices in the Middle Ages and assumed enormous proportions, especially for those who could afford to meet the expenses

[1]verses 65-70. [2]verses 144-49. [3]verses 150-51.

[4]B. B. Mishra, *Polity in the Agni Purāṇa* (Calcutta, 1965), 16.

[5]*Goutama-Dharmasutra* with Maskari Bhashya, ed. L. Srinivasacharya (Mysore, 1917), XI. 17-19.

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involved in these rituals, some of which went on for about a month. A long list of bad portents and measures to neutralise them is found in the *Matsya Purāṇa* in the chapters 228-238. In course of time the term *graha*, in the sense of planet, came to be seen as identical with calamity or misfortune in popular parlance.

The increasing belief in astrology added to the importance of its practitioners. Astrologers and diviners, known by several names in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya, do not find place in the list of officers on the pay-roll of the state. The astrologer also is not mentioned in Gupta records. Apparently till the end of the Gupta period the functions of astrologers were incidental to those of the *purohita*. These were not considered so much specialised as to warrant the creation of a separate office in the royal establishment. But the position changed from towards the end of the Gupta period. The *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* speaks of the office of the *sāṃvatsara*, the person in charge of happenings in the year (*saṃvatsara*) in addition to that of the *purohita*[1] and advises the king to depend on him and the *mantrin*.[2] The *Bṛhat Saṃhitā*, which, like the *Viṣṇudharmottara*,[3] devotes one whole chapter to a discussion of the qualifications and importance of the *sāṃvatsara*,[4] states that a king without this functionary adopts a wrong path like a blind man.[5] It says that the king who does not worship the qualified astrologer meets his doom,[6] and asks a person desiring prosperity not to live in the country which has no *sāṃvatsara*.[7] Kāmandaka describes the *sāṃvatsara* as one who possesses knowledge of planets, etc., is clever at answering questions, and is an expert astrologer (*horāgaṇitatattvavit*).[8] But in spite of these 7th-8th centuries literary references to the *sāṃvatsara*, his office is not mentioned in any contemporary inscription. In fact the astrologer's official position is not recognised in the epigraphs till the middle of the mediaeval period. *Jyotiṣis* and *naimittikas* are mentioned in Gāhaḍavāla records from the 11th century onwards and are remunerated by grant of village resources.

How did astrology and divination originate and become popular? Undoubtedly some of these practices were adopted by priests from primitive people, whose absorption in the brāhmaṇical society began right in Vedic times. Subsequently tribal rituals were refined

[1]II. 161.4. [2]II. 3.6. [3]II. 4. [4]chapter II.
[5]II. 8. [6]II. 6. [7]II. 11.
[8]*Kāmandakīyanītisāra* (Bombay, Śaka Saṃvat 1826), IV. 33.

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and expanded to serve the cause of the class-based order. The fact that all segments of society, right from prince to peasant and from brāhmaṇa to śudra, believed in these superstitions provided a sort of ideological cementing bond. Since everybody was to be rewarded according to his fate he had no cause for complaint, and there was little scope for class tensions and social strife. The success of mediocrity and the failure of merit did not bother the people because this was all ordained by fate. Hence astrology was a strong psychological tie to bind the disparate elements together.

Astrologers played an important role in maintaining political authority. They helped kings by proclaiming their divinity on the battlefield and holding out prospects of victory to the combatants. For the start of his conquest Harṣa's astrologers fixed such an auspicious day and *lagna* (the moment of the sun's entrance into a zodiacal sign) as would enable him to conquer all the four quarters.[1] Therefore astrologers were as effective and serviceable as a regiment of soldiers. Further, they could avert political uprisings and popular commotions by predicting evil consequences for the sponsors. They could also check thefts by their occult ability for detecting the culprits. They acted like police dogs in modern times, but perhaps without possessing the sensing faculty of these animals. So astrologers reinforced the effectiveness of both police and soldiers.

Astrological formulations and prophecies in the *Bṛhat Saṃhitā* of Varāhamihira, Purāṇas, *Kṛṣi-Parāśara* and Alberuni's *India* reflect the social and cultural horizon of the people in early mediaeval times. The effects of the movements of stars and planets relate to those features of life which are typical of an agrarian milieu. Many signs for auspiciousness or otherwise in journey enumerated under the section on *śakuna* are drawn from the world of plants and animals and social categories which do not have much relevance to the modern industrial population whose surroundings are very much different. Had the astrologers been able to predict the advent of the modern means of communication, they could have certainly made suitable modifications in their list of signs governing the success or the otherwise of the journey. Recommendations regarding auspicious occasions for marriage, festivals, etc., take account of the needs and convenience of an agricultural society. It is not an accident that

[1] *Harṣacharita of Bāṇabhatta with the commentary of Śankara*, ed. K.B. Parab (Bombay, 1937), canto VII.

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auspicious days for marriages fall generally in the period when the harvest season is over and sowing is yet to begin. This is naturally an ideal period from the peasant's point of view when he is economically well placed and is free from all agricultural operations. In fact, auspicious days fixed for marriage in the old mediaeval agrarian context do not suit the people now living in industrial towns because for attending marriages according to the old almanac they have to take leave of absence from their work. In course of time the old time table for marriages may have to be revised by the priests, and in any case civil marriages can easily circumvent such fixed dates.

An attempt at the study of the mental life and the beliefs of the rural folk will have to concern itself with astrology and divination which played an important part in their day-to-day life. The literate and illiterate priests—the former working on the basis of written texts and the later working on the basis of traditions and magical practices —helped to keep the social order going. Their predictions covered almost every aspect of life and every section of society. They tried to reduce a welter of things to order—to discover some kind of laws behind happenings. Astrologers freed the people from the worries of calculating the consequences of the steps they wanted to take and thus provided initiative and leadership to them. They enabled the people to take decisions and kept up their spirits in peace and war. Surely much of the prediction-advice given by the astrologers was based on common sense and factual knowledge, and hence proved to be a good guess. But many more predictions were bound to be wrong and absurd. There were very few enlightened persons in mediaeval times who questioned the prophecies even if they went wrong or contradicted one another. Thus the astrological results of the positions of certain asterisms in the *Agni Purāṇa* are diametrically opposed to those stated in the *Bṛhat Saṃhitā*. But such contradictions bothered neither the astrologers nor their clients. If the prophecies did not turn out to be true they could be explained by some last-minute supernatural developments.

In contrast to the paucity of material for the earlier period we have considerable literature on astrology in the Middle Ages. This creates the impression that astrology and divination were prominent features of the mediaeval Indian life. But in this respect the make-up of the ancient mind was not very much different from that of the mediaeval mind. Such differences as exist have to be pointed out by the historian

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who has to reconstruct the history of astrology in the perspective of time and place. But this history cannot be made meaningful unless we study similar practices among primitive peoples in India and elsewhere. Even an initial comparison would show that the Hindu practice of finding out the auspicious time for marriage, journey and house-building is found among many primitive peoples both in and outside India. Where such detailed studies are available they will be of great help in interpreting the early texts, which alone are not sufficient to tell the whole story of the astrological beliefs and practices and of their use by different social groups and classes.[1]

[1]Astrological texts have been used for historical reconstruction. See A.M. Sastri, *India as seen in the Bṛhat-Saṃhitā of Varāhamihira*; B.N.S. Yadav, Presidential Address for Section I, Ancient India, Indian History Congress, Bombay Session, 1980.

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Part II

Economic History

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CHAPTER IX

Stages in Ancient Economy I
Bronze Age Urbanism to Iron-Based Agriculture

I. URBAN EXPERIMENT (*c.* 2600-1500 BC)

THE ECONOMIC history of India can be traced back to *c.* 2600 BC, which marks the birth of an urban civilization marked by the use of bronze technology and based on the surplus produced by the peasants. It is called a bronze age culture because, in spite of the liberal use of stone, bronze and copper implements were widely prevalent.[1] Although bronze was not as important in the Harappa set-up as in the Mesopotamian, its artifacts were employed for both fighting and production purposes in the Indus Valley. Even cups, bowls and dishes made of copper or bronze were in fairly abundant use.[2] The two well-known centres of Harappa culture were Harappa and Mohenjodaro, distinguished by monumental buildings and granaries which symbolised the concentration of social surplus in the cities. Several other sites, including some towns such as Lothal and Kalibangan, have been recently discovered, extending the outposts of the Harappa culture into eastern Punjab, Rajasthan, the Narmada estuary in the Kathiawad peninsula, and also parts of Maharashtra. Harappa antiquities have been also unearthed in Jammu, in the Delhi region and at the fringes of western U.P. In the early seventies nearly 250 Harappan sites were counted, but now according to one estimate about 1000 sites have been noted, and 2/3 of these lie in India. The crucial importance of these sites as feeders of the urban centres is evident. But we need adequate information about the agricultural communities which sustained Harappan towns. However the distribution of the Harappan pottery around towns suggests that the agricultural base was wide and strong enough to support several towns. Apparently carts, boats and pack animals were used to transport foodgrains from the villages to towns. It is significant that granaries at Harappa and Mohenjodaro

[1] cf. Mortimer Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization* (Cambridge, 1968), 78.
[2] ibid.

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were situated not far from the river. Rivers served as arteries of communication between the important Harappa settlements. It seems that constant contacts and colonisation introduced uniformity in the use of chalcolithic implements, pottery, various other craft products, weights and measures.

Thickly populated and congested nucleii of houses, which can be rightly designated towns, were populated by the rulers (possibly non-priests), traders, and craftsmen, who lived on the surplus produced by the peasant communities inhabiting the villages situated in the suburbs. Agriculture and domestication of animals such as bulls, dogs, water-buffaloes, etc., were practised, but the archaeological evidence does not throw much light on the tools and methods of agricultural production. In the pre-Harappan phase at Kalibangan plough cultivation was known, but we have no idea of the material of which the ploughshare was made. It is suggested by Gordon that wooden ploughs may have been used.[1] This looks plausible, for the Vedic texts clearly speak of the use of the wooden shares. In the Indus area lands were annually inundated as a result of the floods, and hence hoes and celts may have been used. But in the Kalibangan region in Rajasthan the use of plough may have continued from pre-Harappan times. Of such cutting implements as could extend the area of cultivation, we hear of the stone axe, which could not be as effective as the socketed axe. The latter first appears in cementery H, ascribed variously to the Āryans or to a still unidentified people known as the Ravi people. In spite of such primitive implements the peasants produced sufficient rice (in Kathiawad), wheat, barley, sesamum and peas, over and above their needs, for the excess to be diverted to meet the needs of the people living in towns and engaged in trade and commerce. Perhaps a part of the cereals was received as taxes, which were stored in the two huge granaries of Harappa and Mohenjodaro. The foodgrains were apparently meant for distribution as wages. We neither know anything about the mechanism for collection nor anything about that for distribution and consumption.

We have no evidence of trade in grain, although a part of the excess grain may have been exported to the neighbouring backward semi-nomadic peoples. Cotton and raw cotton in bales may also have been exported. There may have been some commerce in tin, which was

[1]D.H. Gordon, *The Pre-historic Background of Indian Culture* (Bombay, 1958), 71.

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prossibly imported by traders from Iran, where tin ores are found. But probably tin was obtained from alluvial deposits in the Punjab or Aravalli regions.[1] Copper was obtained from the Khetri mines in Rajasthan, for some Harappan objects which have been examined show the same impurities as are found in the copper ores of Khetri. Further some copper celts/axes found in the Khetri area in Sikar district are considered similar to the Harappan ones. Most Harappan tools were made of copper for which the Harappans did not have to go very far. Probably trade in tin was not as brisk as that in copper, for the proportion of tin found in the Harappa bronze is less than that used in contemporary Mesopotamia. Besides these two metals of common use, the Harappa people also traded in several precious stones such as lapis lazuli, amazonite, jade, etc. These were apparently used as prestige objects or those of ornament and refinment by the higher class people.

In commerce the Harappa culture gravitated more towards the west than the east, for the Harappa seals, belonging to the period between 2600 BC and 1500 BC, especially after 2400 BC, have been found in some quantity in Sumer or Lower Mesopotamia. Trade between Sumer and the Indus Valley seems to have been particularly thriving between 2400 and 2150 BC. The Sumerian texts state that gold, ivory, carnelian, lapis lazuli, peacocks, bird figurines and timber came to Sumer from Meluha, which is identified with western India.[2] Most of these products seem to be of Indian origin, but it is held that the Harappans carried on transit trade in lapis lazuli which was obtained from Badakhshan in north Afghanistan.[3] Whether the Harappa traders set up in Sumer their regular trading agency just as the Semites did in Asia Minor is not known. The Harappans also seem to have carried on trade in some objects with the outskirts of Central Asia bordering on Afghanistan. The Harappans also carried on a considerable amount of sea trade. We find clay models of sailing boats from Lothal and Mohenjodaro, and boats also appear on Harappan seals. A construction at Lothal is taken as a dockyard. This may or may not be true, but the location of several Harappan sites on the sea coast of

[1]cf. Shereen Ratnagar, *Encounters The Westerly Trade of the Harappa Civilization* (Delhi, 1981), 94.

[2]Romila Thapar, "A Possible Identification of Meluha, Dilmum and Magan," *JESHO*, XVIII (1975), 1-42.

[3]Ratnagar, op. cit., 130-38.

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Gujarat does suggest sea trade. From about 2350 BC onwards Mesopotamian records speak of trade relations with Meluha, which was most probably the ancient name given to the Indus region. They also mention two intermediate trading stations called Dilmun (Tilman) and Makan, which lay between Meluha and Mesopotamia.[1] Dilmun can probably be identified with Bahrain on the Persian Gulf. A 'Persian Gulf' seal has been found in Lothal, but archaeology has still to show more objects to prove that the Harappans received many things from outside the subcontinent in exchange. The Harappan foreign trade was more or less confined to luxury or prestige goods, and could not substantially affect the economic life of the common people.

Unless the Indus Valley scripts are deciphered the nature of the organization, which made possible urban activities on a large scale in a very wide area, will remain a matter of speculation. Evidently seals suggest private property, and were used in stamping packages. It is held that they were meant to communicate the rank and title of their users.[2] But if the Mesopotamian analogy is accepted the earliest specimens of writing were meant for book-keeping. The Harappans may have maintained a good many scribes and accountants. Obviously the laying out of towns with intersecting streets and perfect drainage system, and the erection of houses all made of burnt bricks, must have required a huge staff of bricklayers, masons, woodcutters, charcoal-burners, smiths, surveyors, engineers, and carters, a fact which bears testimony to the great organizing feat of the Indus Valley people. The industry of bricklaying and building was far more important and developed in the Indus Valley than in the land of the Euphrates and Tigris, where the bricklayers specialized in bricks baked in the sun. It is suggested that all economic activities were directed by some central authority; town planning also suggests some effective power structure. There is nothing to show that trade in luxury objects meant for prestige and ritualistic purposes substantially strengthened the ruling class in the Harappa context and consequently helped to maintain the urban system. The chief basis of urbanism could be the taxes, tithes and tributes collected from the peasants living in the vicinity of the towns. The theory that slave labour was an important part of the

[1]R. Thapar, op. cit.

[2]Gregory L. Possehl ed. *Ancient Cities of the Indus*, introduction, IX (according to Fairservis). A silver piece called *shekel* was used for the purpose of exchange in Mesopotamia.

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economy and daily life of the Harappa civilization has not much evidence to commend it. Judged from ancient standards the two-room tenements should not necessarily be taken as coolie lines, for even now the average Indian family cannot boast of more than two rooms, which are sufficient to serve the needs of an Indian household of five, mostly working outdoors.

Trade was apparently a considerable element in Harappa urbanism, but it would be too much to assert that like the British trade it accounted for the large extent and phenomenal growth of 'the Harappan empire.'[1] The area covered by the Harappan culture is estimated three or four times the area of ancient Sumer.[2] The Harappa settlements formed a kind of crescent with a straight handle attached to the middle of its back. But the periphery was much wider, and went as far as north Afghanistan, and perhaps included the fringes of Soviet Central Asia. Within this vast area 'relayand' inter-regional exchanges could take place in articles of necessity, and trade with distant lands outside the Harappa orbit could only supplement the internal exchange of goods. Ecological and technological factors seem to have contributed more to the origin and growth of Harappa urbanism. However after the initial stage we notice a comparative stagnation in technology. On its appearance about 2600 BC it strikes us as a bronze age or chalcolithic culture with static maturity, which perpetuates its monotonous, uniform character, with some minor local variations, for about 1,000 years. At the end of this period it goes out of history, leaving its legacy in what is called 'post-urban' villages in Sind, Gujarat and the Punjab. During this long period the Indus people do not make any creative or original contribution to the further progress of material life.

We have no means to find out the internal mechanism of the working of their economy. But apparently the rural base could not be made to support the urban structure for ever unless steps were taken to raise production either by improving technology or by bringing new areas under cultivation. The chalcolithic technology worked reasonably well in the comparatively rainless flood plains of the Indus and its tributaries. The areas in which the Harappan settlements pre-

[1]H.D. Sankalia, "How Harappa went West," *The Times of India*, Sunday Review, 20 June 1982.

[2]Gregory L. Possehl ed., *Ancient Cities of the Indus* (New Delhi, 1979), introduction, XI.

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ponderate did not present problems of clearance or of breaking heavy alluvial soil. But bronze or copper technology could not prove so effective in those zones which had thick vegetation on account of heavy rainfall. Hence when people were faced with decreasing fertility on account of the increasing salinity of the soil caused by the expansion of the neighbouring desert or a sudden subsidence or uplift of the land leading to floods, they could not move eastward and plant their urbanism; at best they could have some 'squatter' settlements in the outer areas. It is also suggested that the peasants may have revolted against the city-based ruling classes.[1] If such a surmise is entertained, we can say that the interdependence between the urban and rural elements, the basis of urbanism, would be destroyed. Some exotic tools and pottery indicate the slow percolation of new peoples in the Indus basin, but so far we do not have any archaeological evidence of mass-scale confrontation between the Harappans and the Āryans.

II. Pastoral Phase (*c.* 1500-1000 BC)

Evidently the Āryans possessed certain technological and material advantages which enabled them to overcome their opponents in India. The widespread use of the horse yoked to their chariots was a potent cause of the military success of the Āryans. The Ṛgvedic Āryans seem to have been acquainted with bronze weapons, for *ayas* may mean bronze. In any case their use of horses and chariots made them formidable from the military point of view.

The striking contrast between the material life of the Āryans and the Harappa people does not lie in the use of metals but in the almost complete absence of towns in the Ṛgvedic period. In this sense the Ṛgvedic economy marks a complete rupture with the Harappa economy. If we rationalize the exploits of Indra recorded in the earliest Indian hymns, the Āryans appear as the destroyers of towns and not their builders. At best the Ṛgvedic people lived in fortified place protected by mud walls, mostly in times of flood, and these cannot be regarded as towns in the Harappa sense. Perhaps the absence of urban life among the Āryans should be ascribed more to their early migratory habits and the pre-dominance of cattle rearing than to any other weakness in the material basis of their culture. Besides, in the first phase of their expansion when they were surrounded by hostile in-

[1]Possehl ed., *Ancient Cities of the Indus*, 288.

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habitants, commonly known as Dāsas and Dāsyus, they could not afford to grow into town dwellers.

But the destructive exploits of their hero god Indra should not make us blind to the great constructive role of the Āryans in the economic history of India. The late portions of the *Ṛgveda* shows that they cultivated by means of the plough drawn by oxen. In the later Vedic texts, while the Vrātyas are described as not cultivating the soil, the Vedic Āryans are frequently credited with practising agriculture. That the non-Āryans, with whose practices the Vrātyas were supposed to have been tainted, knew agriculture is beyond any doubt. Hence the condemnation of the Vrātyas as non-agriculturists only implies that the non-Āryans did not practise the art of ploughing in the Āryan manner. The various operations connected with ploughing, sowing, cutting of the corn with the sickle, threshing, and winnowing are found in the first and tenth books of the *Ṛgveda*, which suggests that agrarian economy became more stable towards the end of the Ṛgvedic period. Consolidated references to ploughing are found at one place in the fourth book, but it is thought that these are later interpolations. References in the *Ṛgveda* also suggest that the Āryans used fire for clearing the forests, thus making the land fit for cultivation.

In spite of their practice of ploughing the Āryans are known to have had only one variety of grain known as *yava*, which may be taken either as a generic name for the various kinds of grain or in its literal meaning barley. Cattle-raising was a more important occupation, especially in the beginning of the Ṛgvedic period. Its importance can be inferred from the fact that 'the search for cows', *gaviṣṭi*, was another name for war, that constant prayers were made for kine; and that the daughter was known as *duhitṛ*, which term literally meant the milker of the cow. In addition to cows, goats, sheep, and horses were domesticated, since common words for those animals are found in Indo-European languages. Of these, kine and horses are mentioned in the *Ṛgveda* in the context of agricultural operations, although the exact use of the latter in agriculture cannot be determined. At any rate horses were not yoked to the plough, although they may well have been used as pack animals for carrying grain and fodder. It looks strange that the urbanism of the Harappan phase based on agricultural production in the flood plains were followed by a pastoral phase in the land of the seven rivers. This was natural on account of the coming

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of new waves of people with their own forms of subsistence. They introduced the widespread use of the horse. Possession of the horse by the Ṛgvedic Āryans made them more mobile and enabled them to take better care of their cattle. Archaeology shows that in the world context agriculture emerged as early as 9000 BC, but it was only between 6000 and 4000 BC that cow was domesticated. Later when the horse and camel came to be domesticated, together with the cow they gave rise to purely nomadic, pastoral economies.[1]

Cattle were tended by common herdsmen, thus suggesting common ownership of some kind. Pasture grounds apparently lay under communal control. Individual ownership of land in the *Ṛgveda* is an arguable proposition. Several words for fields and the practice of measuring land suggested that at least in actual practice there was private occupation of land. But this was of a very limited nature, for even in the later books of the *Ṛgveda* we have no evidence of the sale, transfer, mortgage, or gift of land or its disposal by an individual in any other way. We do not know whether the German analogy of Tacitus, who refers to the communal ownership of land distributed periodically among individuals, holds good of the Ṛgvedic Āryans, but clearly private ownership of land had not become effective during this period.

Among the arts and crafts the most important seem to have been those of leather workers, weavers, wheelwrights, and smiths. Weaving was mainly confined to wool, which was derived from the sheep. It is significant that in many rituals woolen cloth is preferred even now. Cotton, attested by archaeological evidence in the case of the Harappa people, is not known to the *Ṛgveda*. On account of the use of chariots in war the wheelwrights performed an important function; so also seems to have been the case with the smiths, who made tools, implements, and weapons of *ayas*, i.e., copper or bronze. How far they inherited and carried on the craft traditions of the Harappans, whom they succeeded, cannot be said. The Ṛgvedic word for potter, *kulāla*, has no parallels in other Indo-European languages, which might suggest that the Āryans adopted the local traditions in pottery. At several places in the Punjab and Haryana excavations show the

[1]Maurice Godelier, *Perspectives in Marxist Anthropology*, 103. We find that agriculture and domestication of animals in Mehrgarh located on the Bolan river on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border were practised in the 6th and 5th millennia BC.

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interlocking of late Harappan pottery with the Painted Grey Ware, which latter pottery may have been used by the Vedic people. In all these sites no iron has been found in association with the Painted Grey Ware so far. Nearly 200 grey ware sites have also been explored, and most of them lie in the Punjab. But in the excavated grey ware layers in Manda in Jammu, no iron has been discovered. Grey ware settlements may have preceded the PGW settlements, but without solid archaeological evidence we cannot associate the cattle pastoralism of the early Vedic people with the grey ware settlements.

No clear ideas are available about exchange, distribution or the pattern of consumption in the Ṛgvedic society. But just as capture of cattle and other spoils of war was an important source of livelihood, amounting to 'booty production', so also distribution of booty by Indra, Agni[1] and other gods, who were the counterparts of tribal chiefs, was an important form of economic activity. Tvaṣṭā is called the 'first distributor',[2] and the assembly of the Ṛbhus, which he headed, are called willing distributors engaged in distribution.[3] The chief of the pasture ground (*vṛjanasya rājā*) is described as capturing booty from the enemy and distributing it among his people.[4] Members of the *gaṇa* are described as surrendering all the spoils to it,[5] which presumably went even to those who did not make any contribution to its acquisition. Distribution was also an important function of the *vidatha*,[6] one of the earliest assemblies in the *Ṛgveda*. We may also note that there are at least half a dozen roots[7] from which various terms for gift and distribution are derived, and some of them are used very frequently. Of these roots *dā* and *bhaj* (to distribute) continued to be used even in post-Vedic times.

It seems that cattle, horses, women slaves, food called *vāja* or *anna* (edible), and even the cultivated land and water were distributed.[8] But whether the same share was given to every member of the *gaṇa*, *vidatha* or of the other tribal bands is not clear. The clan/tribal

[1]*RV*, X. 62.11. [2]*RV*, VI, 49.9.
[3]*RV*, X. 54.11. [4]*RV*, IX. 97.10.
[5]R.S. Sharma, *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India* (Delhi, 1968), 114.
[6]ibid., 82-83.
[7]The terms derived from the roots *van* and *san* are used more frequently in the *Ṛgveda*.
[8]*RV*, I, 100.18.

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chiefs and their priests obtained a greater share in the spoils, and in addition to this the chiefs of the various kin-based collectivities also received *bali* or tributes from their enemies as well as their clansmen. The idea of reciprocal gift between gods and their devotees comes clearly in several hymns. For example oblations are offered to Agni in return for food and long life.[1] These hymns may reflect the practice of exchange of gifts between tribal chiefs and their tribesmen or between various heads of large extended families. Allocation of resources earned by the various kin-based groups among their members and the custom of mutual aid practised by these units may have served the needs of the kinsmen and others who were treated as such by the tribal peoples.

Since the Ṛgvedic Āryans were mainly occupied with war, they hardly had any time to produce the necessary surplus for purposes of trade. Although literary evidence testifies to their comparatively advanced knowledge of agriculture, this may have developed towards the end of the Ṛgvedic period; in any case agriculture was not as important as cattle rearing. Migratory habits and preoccupation with cattle-raising were serious handicaps in the development of trade. The cow being the medium of exchange, internal transactions of sale and purchase were mostly in barter. Cattle may have been exchanged with sedentary agricultural people for obtaining copper and other metals and also agricultural products. At one place the price of what appears to be an image of Indra is stated in terms of an unspecified unit, suggesting an incipient money economy. This image may have been treated as prestige good typical of a tribal society. It is reasonable to suppose that the Ṛgvedic Āryans did not possess any knowledge of the sea, and the word *samudra* is used in the sense of collection of waters lying at the mouth of the Indus.

III. Plough Cultivation and Agricultural Economy (*c.* 100-600 BC)

The later Vedic period witnessed the expansion of the Āryans from the plains of the Indus and its tributaries to the Indo-Gangetic Divide and the upper Gangetic basin. In other words they occupied the Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and the adjoining areas of Rajasthan. The sandy and loamy soil of this region and its thin vegetation did not present difficult problems of clearance and settle-

[1] *RV*, I. 73.5.

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ment. The texts of the period give some clue to the material basis of this expansion. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* states how Videgha Māthava went on burning the forests till he reached the Sadānīrā in North Bihar, an event which probably took place towards the end of the Vedic period. Burning, which was now adopted on a considerable scale, seems to have been supplemented by the use of the iron axe for cutting forests in Eastern U.P. and Northern Bihar in about 600 BC. According to one source the plough was made of *udumbara* (Ficus Glomerata) wood, and the *khadira* (Acacia Catechu) ploughshare was used by the cultivators. We have references to the yoking of six, eight, twelve, and even twenty-four oxen to the plough, indicating deep ploughing which could be rendered possible by the use of the iron ploughshare. Literary texts indicate the advent of iron about 700 BC, for we have references to the black, dark metal in some very late Vedic texts.

Although the *Atharvaveda* contains innumerable prayers for the increase of cattle, agriculture had come to be the chief means of the livelihood of the people, cattle remaining the principal form of their movable property. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* devotes one whole Brāhmaṇa (VII. 2.2) to rites in connection with ploughing. In addition to barley an important crop produced during this period was wheat, which still continues to be the staple food of the people in the Punjab and U.P. But curiously enough during this period rice, known as *vrīhi*, looms large in Vedic texts. Remains of rice, ascribable to about the eighth century BC, have been found at Hastināpura. At this stage, however, rice seems to have been of the untransplanted variety. The use of rice is recommended in rituals, but that of wheat only rarely. Various kinds of lentils were also produced. Sugarcane, which is mentioned in the *Atharvaveda* (1. 34. 1-5), may have been valued as a wild product.

In this period we have clear indications of the private use of land although we have no idea about the various kinds of right involved in it. It is stated that a person who has a dispute about a field or with his neighbours should make an offering to Indra and Agni on eleven potsherds. For the first time we hear of attempts at grants of land. We learn that the kṣatriya can grant a settlement to a man with the consent of the clan.[1] This implies the existence of separate holdings under the general control of the ruling tribe, at the head of which stood the king who was no better than a glorified tribal chief. But we

[1] *ŚB*, VII. 1.4.

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have no cases of actual grants, for when in one case land was granted to a brāhmaṇa, the Earth Goddess refused to be transferred.

The peasants produced some surplus to support the emerging classes of brāhmaṇas and rājanyas. The priests, who headed the social order, officiated at the various rituals, sacrifices, and festivals associated with agricultural operations, and offered prayers for the success of their patron chiefs in war. The rājanyas or the kṣatriyas earned their livelihood by means of war and government. The viś or the vaiśyas carried on agriculture, and the śūdras formed a small serving order. Thus the priests and warriors had hardly any connection with the primary aspect of production. It is not clear whether they owned large areas of land during this period. Keith holds that during the period of the Brāhmaṇas there had emerged large estates worked by slaves and serfs. But there does not seem to be any basis for such a theory, for we have hardly any instance of slaves being employed in production. The term *karmakara* or hired labourer does not occur in the Vedic texts. This suggests that people possessed only as much land as they could manage with their family labour. Inequalities of wealth did not result so much from the direct exploitation of slave labour as from the collection of a part of the produce from the peasants in the form of taxes and tributes by the king and his officers. In the *Atharvaveda*[1] prayer is made to Indra for the grant of a share in villages, kine, and horses to the king. The share in villages perhaps implies a share in the crops produced by peasants, which was perhaps deposited with the *saṃgrahitṛ*.

An important development in the later Vedic economy was the rise of diverse arts and crafts, which are enumerated in the list of the people meant for the *puruṣa-medha* (human sacrifice). This indicates considerable progress in the differentiation of functions but not any qualitative change in economy. We hear of smelter (*dhmātr*) and smith or carpenter (*karmāra*), but we are not quite sure whether they contributed substantially iron working, which had just begun. General words for weaving suggest that this craft was mainly confined to women and practised on a wide scale. Leather work, pottery, and carpenter's work, probably connected with building activities, had also made some progress. We also hear of jewel workers, who probably catered for the needs of people living in towns. The beginning of towns towards the end of this period is suggested by the use of such words as town (*nagara*), town-dweller (*nagarin*), and the mention of Kauśāmbī,

[1] IV. 22.2.

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Kośala, and Vidarbha as great towns. Excavations prove the existence of at least three towns, Ahicchatrā, Kauśāmbī and Hastināpura, the origins of which can be attributed to the 6th century BC. It is doubtful whether arts and crafts contributed in any substantial measure to the rise of these towns; they seem to have been rather seats of political power.

The texts of the period make distinct references to the sea, and sea voyages, which may have been made for the purpose of carrying on commerce, stimulated by the rise of new arts and crafts.

By and large the first half of the first millennium BC registered a great advance in the economy and material life of the people in the Indo-Gangetic Divide and the upper Gangetic basin. The pastoral and semi-nomadic forms of living of the early Vedic people were relegated to the background. Agriculture became the chief source of livelihood and made life settled and sedentary. Settlements continued in the upper Gangetic plains for two or three centuries, as can be inferred from several excavated sites which possessed Painted Gray Ware in association with iron. They also became far more widespread as compared with earlier settlements, for nearly 700 Painted Gray Ware sites in the Sutlej and upper Gangetic basin have been counted so far as a result of excavations and explorations. The peasants living in the plains produced enough cereals to support themselves, and they could also spare a part of their produce for the use of the emerging classes of the brāhmaṇas and rājanyas in the forms of gifts, presents, taxes and tributes. What was collected from the peasants or from smaller chiefs ruling over peasants by bigger chiefs was distributed by the latter amongst their kinsmen, officers and others on the occasion of great sacrifices such as the *rājasūya* and *aśvamedha*. Such sacrifices described in the epics were occasions not only for collecting tributes from chiefs and others but also for distributing a good portion of the tributes in the form of goods and eatables amongst all these who attended sacrificial sessions; of course in the case of the brāhmaṇas this redistribution tended to become unilateral because they did not contribute anything to the common pool raised by the sacrificing king. These occasional redistributions were backed by the barter system which kept the Vedic economy going. Cattle still continued as a medium of exchange, and such metal objects as *niṣka* and *śatamāna* may have been used for exchanging 'prestige' goods, for till the sixth century BC metallic money did not come into use.

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Although we find a widespread agrarian economy in the upper Gangetic basin, it suffered from several handicaps. It seems that it did not make use of iron for craft or agriculture production on any significant scale. This was natural because the supply of iron was very limited in the neighbouring areas. For wide use in cultivation and handicrafts plentiful supply of iron was essential, but the richest iron ores found in south Bihar were probably out of the reach of the Vedic people. Secondly iron objects of later Vedic times or of the Painted Grey Ware phase were marked by a primitive technology. The smiths did not know how to maintain very high temperature for manufacturing iron objects and were therefore not able to harden these artifacts with the result that these wrought iron objects were not very effective. Further the paddy or *vrīhi* that the later Vedic people produced was a rainy season crop which ripened in sixty days (therefore called *ṣaṣṭhi*). They did not know the art of paddy transplantation which naturally restricted production. All these handicaps were overcome in post-Vedic times in the middle Gangetic plains.

IV. Iron-based Production in Crafts and Agriculture (*c.* 600-322 BC)

The period from *c.* 600-322 BC may be taken as marking a significant change in the economy, which was strengthened by the widespread use of iron, the extensive cultivation of rice, sugar, and cotton, the rise and growth of numerous towns in the middle Gangetic plains, the further diversification of crafts and their organization into guilds, and last but not the least the brisk inland and foreign trade, as evidenced by the numerous finds of the punch-marked coins.

Archaeologically with the sixth century BC begins the North Black Polished (NBP) phase, which was distinguished by the use of this glossy pottery, iron objects for purposes of both war and production and punch-marked coins for purposes of tax collection and commodity exchange. All these developments appear prominently in the middle Gangetic basin or in eastern Uttar Pradesh and alluvial Bihar, but they are also found in the upper Gangetic basin and even as far as the Malwa area. Nearly 450 NBP sites are found in the alluvial tracts on both sides of the Gaṅgā between Allahabad and Bhagalpur.

These presuppose rural settlements in a large area in the age of the Buddha, which was preceded by a few straggling chalcolithic

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settlements at river confluences although more of these may have existed in the hilly and red soil areas.

The material gains made by the people of the upper Gangetic basin in the first half of the first millennium BC were maintained and developed further in the second half. This can be inferred from a comparison of the deposits of the North Black Polished Ware phase at Atranjikhera with those of the PGW phase at the same site. NBP finds of pre-300 BC have been reported from several sites in the upper Gangetic basin including Ropar[1] and Ahicchatra.[2] More or less contemporary deposits have been reported from Ujjain[3] and Besnagar[4] in Malwa. This would presuppose that even the upper Gangetic basin and the Malwa plateau enjoyed the material advantages associated with the NBP phase culture. But by and large most NBP sites appear in the middle Gangetic zone, which as we learn from the Pāli texts, shot into political and economic prominence in pre-Maurya times. The earliest written texts hardly tell us anything either about political or economic developments in the Deccan or south India, not to speak of the easternmost part of the country. But the equipment of the megalith people deposited in their graves in the Deccan and south India clearly shows that the megalith builders were agriculturists and artisans who used iron implements and a pottery known as the black-and-red ware; they were not acquainted with the NBP until towards the end of the megalithic phase. However the point has to be stressed that the users of the NBP their made their home in the middle Gangetic zone in large numbers. In spite of sixth-fifth centuries BC dates for NBP deposits from some upper Gangetic sites, NBP finds are far more profuse and widespread in eastern U.P. and Bihar than anywhere else. So far we can count nearly 450 sites in this area, and a systematic exploration might expose many more sites. For the first

[1]We have two carbon-14 dates from Ropar, 390 BC (*IAR*, 1965-66, p. 90) and 325 BC (*Radiocarbon*, vol. 8, 1966, p. 450).

[2]One carbon-14 date from Ahicchatra is 475 BC (*IAR*, 1965-66, p. 91), and the other is 410 BC (*Radiocarbon*, vol. 8, 1966, p. 444), although we have a couple of dates later than 200 BC.

[3]We get two carbon-14 dates from Ujjain, 450 BC (*IAR*, 1967-68, p. 70) and 385 BC (*Radiocarbon*, vol. 11, 1969, p. 192).

[4]We may note three carbon-14 dates from Besnagar, namely 310 BC (*IAR*, 1976-77, p. 87), 470 BC (ibid. 1965-66, p. 88) and 400 BC (*Radiocarbon*, vol. 10, 1968, p. 132). I owe to Deputy Kohli and Sheo Dutt all the information supplied in footnotes 1-4.

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time they suggest largescale agricultural settlements and the formation of a good many villages, which are mentioned in Pāli texts. They also suggest close links between the town and the country, for the same types of pottery have been found both at urban sites as well as in the adjacent countryside. Further they indicate the emergence in the Gangetic basin and Malwa of an affluent class capable of using *de luxe* pottery, semiprecious stones, etc., in the middle of the first millennium BC.

The spurt in agrarian expansion could not have been possible withou t the clearance of jungles in the middle Gangetic alluvium zone which has a heavy rainfall. Of course the burning of forests was practised, but for making the land fit for cultivation on which settlements were based it was necessary to take out or cut out the stumps of the trees which strike horizontal roots in this area. It is inconceivable that all this could have been easily done without the use of the iron axe or hoe. The hoe or the spade may have been used in cultivating small plots of land, but large scale cultivation, giving rise to numerous villages and several towns, was not possible with the spade. Nor was it possible with the help of the wooden ploughshare which could work in the light, loamy soil of the upper Gangetic basin but not in the heavy soil (*kewāl*) of Patna which could be broken only with the iron ploughshare. Literary texts, as shown later, of the age of the Buddha leave no doubt about the use of the iron share. But only two shares, one from Kauśāmbī and the other from the Vaishali area have been found so far, and of these the latter belongs to the late NBP phase in the middle Gangetic Zone. However socketed axes and some other tools meant for production have been found.

Iron objects have certainly been found in good numbers at Kauśāmbī, Prahladpur, Banaras, and Mason (all in eastern U.P.) and in Chirand, Vaiśālī, Patna, Sonpur and Campā (all in Bihar). A good many of these belong to the pre-300 BC NBP phase, and relatively the number of tools used for production increases when compared with the first phase of the iron objects found in the upper Gangetic basin. But what is important is the fact that although south Bihar contains the richest iron ores the number of iron objects discovered in the middle Gengetic plains is not as impressive as those found, at Atranjikhera, Noh or similar sites of the Painted Gray Ware phase in the upper Gangetic basin. Nevertheless Kauśambī and Banaras (Rajghat) have yielded a large number and a good variety of iron artfacts. Further the

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objects found in the upper Gangetic basin are far better preserved. The comparative lack of iron objects and their corroded character in eastern U.P. and in Bihar is the result of the moist and humid climate of the middle Gangetic zone which reduced everything to rust and dust. On the other hand the dry, semi-arid climate of the upper Gangetic basin creates soil conditions for much better preservation. The absence of various tools meant for use in agriculture and handicrafts is also due to the fact that the archaeology of rural sites has not been given the same attention as has been bestowed on the digging of urban sites. But even in urban settlements a good number of such tools has been discovered. Many iron tools consisting of axes, adzes, knives, razors, nails, sickles, etc., belonging to the early layers of the NBP phase, have been found at Kauśāmbī, and contemporaneous to that phase axes have been found at Sonpur in Gaya district. A ploughshare belonging to the second period of the PGW phase has been reported from Jakhera in Eta district in Western U.P.[1] It may well have belonged to the middle of the first millennium BC. In Ropar an iron share has been found below a ring well, and it may belong to the early NBP phase. We may reasonably await the discovery of such shares in the middle Gangetic zone when rural settlements are excavated. Meanwhile it is clear that the plentiful source of iron in south Bihar was known to the people of the middle Gangetic basin, for some artifacts of the NBP phase from Banaras contain the same impurities as noticed in the iron ores of Singhbhum and Mayurbhanj. It is also probable that by this time the smiths had learnt to put more carbon in the manufactured objects and to take out most of the slag.[2] Plentiful supply of iron ores and improvement in the technology of their manufacture were bound to play a significant role in agricultural and handicrafts production. It must be noted that working in iron ores is immeasurably more advantageous than working in copper ores. A smith can put forth all his skill, time and energy, and can still get ouly one kilogram of copper out of 100 kilograms of copper ores; in a similar situation he gets 60-70 kgs of iron out of 100 kgs of iron ores.[3] Naturally once the rich iron ores were discovered and the necessary technology mastered, the subsistence agriculture of earlier times gave

[1] *Indian Archaeology 1974-75—A Review* (cyclostyled), 1-102.

[2] H.C. Bhardwaj, *Aspects of Ancient Indian Technology* (Delhi, 1979), 158-59.

[3] Personal communication from Shri Jayram Sharma of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, New Delhi.

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way to the surplus-producing agriculture.

Literary evidence also throws some light on the use of iron. It seems that the growing knowledge of the use of iron was facilitated by the use of bellows. Although in one text it is stated by way of simile that a ploughshare is heated through the whole day, suggesting thereby that the bellows was not in use, several texts of the period clearly refer to the use of bellows.[1] Its introduction made possible the production of iron tools and implements in large quantities, and this hastened the process of the clearance of jungles in eastern U.P. and in Bihar. Various kinds of rice, known as *śāli* for the first time, and especially the cultivation of sugar, required deep ploughing, which in its turn needed the periodical sharpening of the ploughshare by means of bellows. The evidence from Pāṇini shows that fields were ploughed twice or thrice; they were also divided according to crops. A significant development in cultivation was the beginning of transplantation of paddy. The term for transplantation is found in the Pāli and Sanskrit texts of the period. Paddy now became a winter crop, and wet paddy production enormously added to the yield making it double or more. Rice was the staple cereal in eastern U.P. and in Bihar, and various types of paddy and paddy fields are described in the Pāli texts. In addition, the peasants also produced barley, pulses, millets, cotton and sugarcane. Given the immense fertility of the alluvial soil in the middle Gangetic plains, the new agriculture was bound to take great strides. Thus an improved knowledge of cultivation and the use of effective implements enabled the peasants to produce more surplus, which could be used in feeding the people of about sixty towns that are mentioned during this period, and also for purposes of trade. Trade received further impetus from improvement in the mode of transport. A later Jātaka (iv, 210) informs us that a sheath of iron, two inches wide, was put round the outer edge of the wheel to make it very strong. It seems that by this time iron products themselves had become an important item in trade. Herodotus, who flourished in the fifth century BC, refers to the iron-tipped arrows carried by Indian soldiers of the army of the Persian ruler Xerxes. Similarly his contemporary Ktesias pays tribute to the excellence of the two swords of Indian steel presented to Artaxerxes Mnemon. Thus it is rightly suggested that trade in Indian iron and steel had already commenced in the fourth century BC.

[1] *Pāṇini*, VII. 3.47; *Uvāsagadasāo*, ed. A.F. Rudolf Hoernle (Calcutta, 1890), 108.

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At any rate, in spite of unimpressive material remains, it is fair to infer that the use of iron in pre-Maurya times made an important contribution to the overall development of economy.

It seems that the Buddhist ideology of non-injury to living beings and reaction against Vedic sacrifices helped to protect the cattle wealth, which was indispensable for the progress of agriculture. A Buddhist text[1] states that cattle constitute the source of grain, strength, beauty, happiness, and hence they should not be slaughtered. Thier value was also emphasized by a brāmaṇical law-book, which lays down the difficult penance of *cāndrāyaṇa* for slaying a milch-cow or a draught-ox.[2] In view of numerous references to cow-slaughter in Pāli and Vedic texts,[3] this must be regarded as a healthy and welcome development from the economic point of view. Cattle were probably owned individually, but, as in the Vedic period, grassland or wood was owned in common.

Efforts for the extension of the arable land by clearing woodland continued in pre-Maurya times. It is laid down by a lawgiver that the king may injure trees that bear fruits or flowers in order to extend cultivation and perform sacrifices.[4] There prevailed the practice of burning forests for this purpose, as can be inferred from the comment of Abhayasūri to a passage of a Jain canonical text.[5] Initiative for bringing virgin soil under cultivation was obviously taken by the state or the community, to the pioneering or collective efforts of which can be ascribed the creation of plots of 500 or 1,000 *karīsas*, cultivated by slaves and hired labourers. But individuals did not lack such initiative. We have an instance of the sale of forest land cleared by the proprietor or his ancestors.[6] It seems that in the middle Gangetic plains a considerable portion of land lay in the hands of the two upper varṇas, who were generally free from taxes, but perhaps a greater part of the land was in possession of *gahapatis* (peasant proprietors) or *kuṭumbikas* (well-to-do peasants). The number of such independent peasants was substantial, and their holdings were just sufficient to maintain them. According to Baudhāyana, a lawgiver of about the fifth century BC, an ideal economic holding, necessary to support a family, seems to have been one measuring six *nivartanas*. This may have been the aver-

[1] *Sutta-Nipāta*, PTS, 296-97, cf. 309.
[2] *Baudh. Dh. S.*, I. 10.4.
[3] S.K. Das, *The Economic History of Ancient India* (Calcutta, 1944), 110-11.
[4] *Vas. Dh. S.*, XIX. 12. [5] *Uvāsaga*, 51.
[6] Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, 46-47.

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age size of a holding with regional variations. In any case the holdings of individual were well-demarcated, for Pāṇini refers to a systematic survey of agricultural land undertaken by special officers called *kṣetrakaras*, corresponding to the *rajjugāhaka amaccas* of Buddhist sources. We have no idea of the rate of tithe, which may have varied from 1/6th to 1/12th, but, in cases of emergency, taxes in cash were also levied from the people.[1] In spite of individual rights in land two things are very clear about the land system of pre-Maurya times. First, although land revenues were assigned to the brāhmaṇas, there was no sizeable class of intermediaries between the king and the tillers of the soil. The peasants paid taxes directly to the king and were sometimes compelled to perform *corvée*. Secondly, there was a definite anti-alienating and communal feeling, subsisting from old tribal days, which did not allow free and easy disposal of land by way of sale, gift or mortgage.

A distinctive feature of pre-Maurya times is the development of urban economy, which reappears in India after a lapse of about one thousand years and arises in the middle Gangetic plains for the first time around *c.* 600 BC. In connection with the begging round of a monk the Jain canonical texts mention different kinds of urban settlements such as a scot-free town, a town with an earthen wall, a town with a small wall, an isolated town, a large town, a sea-town, and a capital.[2] We further learn that Aristobulus, when sent on a commission by Alexander to a region left desert by a shifting of the Indus to the east, saw the remains of over a thousand towns and villages once full of men. Unfortunately these towns of the Indus Valley have not been excavated so far. Taking the country as a whole, to this period are assigned sixty well-known towns, spreading from Campā in the east to Bhṛgukaccha in the west, from Kavaripaṭṭana in the south to Kapilavastu in the north.[3] Big cities such as Śrāvastī were twenty in number, and six of them were considered sufficiently important to be the scene of the Buddha's passing away. These were Campā, Rājagṛha, Sāketa, Kauśāmbī, Banaras, and Kuśīnārā; the greatness of Pāṭaliputra was still to come. Many a town owed their importance to arts and crafts. Thus in the case of Rājagṛha later texts refer to the existence

[1] V.S. Agrawala, *India as known to Pāṇini* (Lucknow, 1953), 414-15.

[2] *Antagaḍa-Dasāo*, trans. by L.D. Barnett, 44-45; *Āyāraṅga Sutta* PTS, 1.7.6.4; *Kalpasūtra*, ed. H. Jacobi, 89; *Sūyagaḍam*, ed. P.L. Vaidya, 11.2.6.

[3] S.K. Das, op. cit., 179-83.

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of eighteen guilds. Of the conventional eighteen guilds referred to in the Buddhist texts only the names of four, i.e,, woodworkers, smiths, leather-workers, and painters, are mentioned. Every guild was presided over by a head, and had its own laws. In two Buddhist birth-stories, the royal procession on two important occasions is said to have included the eighteen guilds, which implies that the king exercised some general control over them. Probably the *bhāṇḍāgārika*, who held the office of the treasurer at Banaras, exercised such a supervision over all the guilds on behalf of the king. Industry and trade were handled by seṭṭhis, who generally lived in towns but also maintained connections with their counterparts living in the countryside. There were different grades of seṭṭhis, high and low, and the title of seṭṭhis was conferred as a mark of distinction by the king. Such seṭṭhis were also granted *bhogagāmas* or revenues of the villages for their upkeep. But we are not sure whether the seṭṭhi had any connection with the guild. At any rate, the king's supervision did not destroy the initiative of the guilds, for while administering justice he was required to take into account the laws of the guilds, castes, and regions. Similarly although localization and heredity came to be associated with crafts on account of the prevalence of the guilds, they did not suffer from lack of mobility. We know the story of a whole village of carpenters who overnight immigrated to a different place because they found it impossible to comply with the wishes of the king.

We do not know the exact relation between the village and the town. But there is no doubt that more than 550 NBP sites that are known in the upper and middle Gangetic plains mainly represented rural settlements that served as feeders of towns in these areas. Towndwellers mainly comprised those who were not directly engaged in food-producing activities. Villages, because of better means of production, produced seven kinds of grain and seven kinds of pulses, and obviously supplied the surplus food for the large number of artisans, merchants and soldiers, and also for the household establishments of the king and nobles living in the town. The products from the countryside also supported a large number of monks and nuns who lived on the outskirts of towns and also wandered in the villages. Whatever may be their motives, it is difficult to think of large numbers of renouncers without the availability of a good amount of social surplus. Pāṇini indicates that the king and richer sections of people employed as many as a dozen varieties of attendants to look to their per-

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sonal comforts.[1] While the king gathered his taxes in kind, some seṭṭhis collected grain from their *bhogagāmas* in the countryside, which enabled them to live comfortably. In return for surplus grain the towns probably supplied cloth to villages, for we hear of the cultivation of cotton in the neighbourhood of Banaras which manufactured cloth from it.

Like town life, trade revived on a considerable scale after a lapse of 1,000 years. Cloth seems to have been an important article of trade, for the early Pāli texts suggest that cotton came into general use in the age of the Buddha, but trade was mainly confined to luxury articles. Nevertheless, traders laden with commodities frequented the distant and difficult trade routes in the country. We have frequent references to caravans of 500 carts each in the Buddhist birth-stories. Traders probably visited such distant countries as Babylon, and shore-sighting birds were employed to facilitate navigation. Finds of the same type of some glass objects and semi-precious stones suggest long-distance trade in these luxury and prestige objects, evidently meant for the use of the richer sections of people living in north Indian towns. Trade may have also been carried in the finer varieties of North Black Polished pottery.

Trade was facilitated by the advent of money economy, which was ushered in by the use of punch-marked coins. Vedic evidence for the prevalence of coins is not corroborated by any finds belonging to that period. Our earliest finds of coins cannot be dated prior to the age of the Buddha, when they were used by groups of merchants who punched their marks on them. During this period money economy had become so important that even the price of a dead mouse is stated in terms of money. We repeatedly hear of seṭṭhis or others possessing eighty *koṭis* (crores) of wealth and living in towns. Moneylending was practised, and although it was not encouraged by Buddhism, as by Calvinism, those who had not cleared off their debts were not permitted to join the Buddhist Saṅgha.

It would be fair to conclude that in pre-Maurya times we notice a burgeoning of agrarian settlements in northern India, particularly in the middle Gangetic plains which were also dotted with many towns. The precise role of the state in rural expansion and urbanisation cannot be clearly indicated. It has been suggested that the punch-marked

[1]V.S. Agarwala, op. cit., 97-98.

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coins were issued by the ruling dynasties of Magadha and Kosala; the possibility cannot be ignored, but we still find it difficult to attribute coins to particular rulers. The rulers showed interest in other economic activities such as the clearance of forests, the regulation of the land system, and the supervision of guilds. Capitals of the kingdom were bound to grow into large markets, and some long-distance trade was required to serve the ostentations living of the priests, warriors and rich merchants. But we cannot say whether the rulers contributed directly to trade and urbanism. None the less these two elements may have strengthened the state system by giving social hegemony to those who lived in big houses in towns and used prestige goods.

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CHAPTER X

Stages in Ancient Economy II
State Production to Feudal Economy

I. State Control of Production (*c.* 322-200 BC) and Pan-Indian Perspective

In Maurya times we witness an unprecedented expansion of the economic activities of the state. The distinguishing feature of Maurya economy is the state control of agriculture, industry, and trade, and the levy of all varieties of taxes from the people. Evidently the state was in dire need of a great amount of surplus in kind and cash, which had been rendered necessary because of several factors. First, no other state in ancient India, either earlier or later, maintained such a huge standing army as the Mauryas did. The process had begun with the Nandas (354-324 BC), who had raised their army from 5,000 elephants, 20,000 cavalry, and 50,000 foot-soldiers to 60,000 elephants, 100,000 cavalry, and 200,000 foot-soldiers. Perhaps these figures accord well with the traditions about the enormous wealth of the Nandas. But by the time of Candragupta Maurya this figure multiplied almost twice, for Plutarch and Justin inform us that this first Maurya emperor overran the whole of India with 600,000 men. Megasthenes puts the total number of Mauryan army at 400,000. This large army was essential to keep the peasantry of a vast empire under subjection, for the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya speaks of the wrath of the people or *prakṛtikopa*. It was also needed to defend the different parts of the far-flung empire, but all this would mean terrific economic strain, which could not be met without finding new sources of income. Secondly, the Mauryas followed the policy of maintaining sufficient surplus in the treasury against emergencies. The normal taxes were not considered sufficient to meet all the needs of the state, and hence the state undertook and regulated numerous economic activities, which formed profitable sources of income to it. These enterprises necessitated the employment of a vast, numerous bureaucracy, consisting of the superintendents and subordinate staff in some thirty departments; this further burdened the state exchequer, which had to be replenished by

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new sources of taxes.

The Mauryas made an important contribution to the development of rural economy by founding new settlements and rehabilitating the decaying ones by drafting surplus settlers from overpopulated areas. Not only ordinary peasants but also the śūdras, who were regarded as the collective property of the three higher varṇas, meant for their service as slaves and hired labourers, were encouraged to settle in these settlements, made possible by the aid granted to them by the state. In order to bring virgin soil under cultivation, the cultivators were allowed remissions of taxes and other concessions by way of supply of cattle, seeds, and money, in the hope that they would repay when they were in a position to do so. In the new settlements land was granted to retired village officials and priests, but such land could not be sold, mortgaged, or inherited. Even the ordinary peasants could not pass on their land to the non-taxpaying peasants. If the farmers failed to cultivate the plots allotted to them, these were transferred to others for better use. Although the extent of these new settlements founded as a result of *janapadaniveśa* or *śunyaniveśa* is not known, it would be reasonable to suppose that a considerable portion of the Gaṅgā basin was brought under cultivation. The colonising effort may have been extended to the outlying areas also.

The state farms working under the supervision of the *sītādhyakṣa*, or superintendent of agriculture, formed a major source of income to the state. We do not know the origin of these farms, but the state-controlled agriculture seems to have been the natural culmination of the extensive farming with units of 500 or 1,000 *karisas*, carried on by some rich landowners in pre-Maurya times. Megasthenes refers to the absence of slavery, but under Candragupta a considerable number of slaves and hired labourers was employed in working these farms. Besides, the superintendent made use of an advanced knowledge of agriculture, which is presented in some detail in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya.

What helped agriculture most was the provision of irrigation facilities by the state and the regulation of water supply for the benefit of the agriculturists. Megasthenes inform us that in the Maurya empire the officers measured the land as in Egypt, and inspected sluices by which water was distributed into the branch channels, so that everybody might enjoy his fair share of the benefit. We learn from Kauṭilya that irrigation cess amounted to a fifth, a fourth, or a

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third of the produce of the irrigated soil. As in Egypt, the regulation of irrigation may have contributed to the centralization of the state power, especially in Western U.P. and Punjab, where only a regular supply of water could ensure the normal yield of crops.

If Kauṭilya's instructions regarding *durganiveśa* or *durgavidhāna* were followed the Maurya state could be credited with the founding of walled towns peopled not only by priests, nobles and soldiers but also by artisans, merchants and others. Some of the fortified cities in the Gangetic basin exposed by digging may have been founded in the third century BC or a little later. The towns were important to the Mauryas not only because of the state control of crafts and commerce but also because of rich dividends they paid in the form of various types of taxes. It may be noted that towns (*durga*) and the countryside (*rāṣṭra* or *janapada*) were considered two chief sources of income to the state. The Maurya state regulated trade and industry by means of a number of superintendents. The superintendent of commerce (*paṇyādhyakṣa*) corresponded to Megasthenes's 'great officers of state of whom some held the charge of the market'. The superintendent of weights and measures (*pautavādhyakṣa*) was responsible for enforcing correct weights and measures. The superintendent of ships regulated transport by water and collected ferry dues. But the customs on commodities for internal and external commerce were mainly collected by the superintendent of tolls (*śulkādhyakṣa*), who received customs varying from 1/5th to 1/25th according to the nature of commodities. The state derived further profit from the supervision of several industries. The superintendent of weaving (*sūtrādhyakṣa*) looked after the weaving industry, which was mainly run by women's labour. The superintendent of liquor managed the breweries and state wine shops, which flourished at the cost of private breweries, encumbered with the payment of heavy duties to the state. Thus the state enjoyed almost unrestricted monopoly in trade in liquor, as in salt.

An important activity which sustained royal power, agriculture, trade, and industry, was mining and metallurgy. Speaking of the Kathaians in the time of Alexander, Strabo states that the Indians are unacquainted with the mining and the smelting of ores and hence do not know their wealth and traffic with simplicity,[1] but this can apply

[1]McCrindle, *Ancient India as described in Classical Literature*, 86.

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only to the Kathaians and not to the Indians as a whole. In the Maurya period Kauṭilya provides for the superintendent of mines (*ākarādhyakṣa*), who was expected to possess a thorough knowledge of the technical aspects of mining, including metallurgy. He was to prospect for new mines and discover old and disused ones by various signs. The literary evidence suggests that gold, silver, copper, lead, tin, iron, and bitumen were worked. But, except for the mining of copper and gold, the archaeological evidence is scanty. It has been suggested that the copper and gold mines in Dhalbhum in Chotanagpur were worked since the time of Candragupta Maurya. The nearest copper mines to the Maurya capital Pāṭaliputra are those of Baragunda in the Hazaribagh district and Singhbhum, and probably they furnished at least some copper vessels used at the court.[1] Since numerous small heaps of iron slag are to be found scattered all over the iron belt in south Bihar, these may have been the refuse of local iron smelters.[2] But whether these workings are as old as the Maurya period cannot be stated. Literary testimony, however, does not leave any doubt about the working of iron, for *loha* (iron) in its various forms is mentioned far more frequently in the *Arthaśāstra* than *tāmra* (copper). The *lohādhyakṣa* seems to have been the officer in charge of iron working. Other officers employed in connection with mining and metal work were the superintendent of digging (*khanyādhyakṣa*), the officer who distinguished between different elements (*laksaṇādhyakṣa*), and the superintendent of salt (*lavaṇādhyakṣa*). Thus the state enjoyed a monopoly in the working of mines and in trade in mineral products. This was not only a source of great income but was also of great help in strengthening the central power, for only the state could equip the soldiers with metal arms and furnish agriculture and industry with necessary tools and implements. Kauṭilya was fully conscious of the importance of metals and mining. He points out that the treasury has its origin in mining, and force (*daṇḍa*) in the treasury, and it is by means of the treasury and force that the earth is acquired (II.2).

The income derived from economic undertakings was supplemented by a large number of customary and new taxes. The chief tax was the royal share in the produce of the peasants, amounting to perhaps 1/6th. But the Greek accounts suggest that this was levied at the rate of 1/4th of the produce. One Greek source indicates that the levy

[1]Murray, *JRASB*, 3rd series, VI, 101.
[2]ibid., 79.

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amounted to 1/4th, but the other states that the peasants received one-fourth of the produce as their share. Perhaps the second is due to some confusion, and both mean the same thing. However, we hear of sharecroppers, who were supplied with seed, oxen, etc., by the state and received arable land for cultivation. Those who were in a position to invest their own capital in the land allotted to them by the state received half the crop as share. Thus the state derived income from both the fixed royal share of 1/6th of the produce as well as from sharecropping. Besides the regular *bhāga* (royal share of 1/6th), the peasants were required to pay the *piṇḍakara*, which was lump assessment made on the groups of villages. We do not know the nature of another tax, known as *bali*, which was as old as Vedic times but may have been a religious tax during Maurya times. *Kara* was probably a part of the produce from the fruit and flower gardens paid to the state. *Senābhakta* probably involved an obligation on the part of the villagers to supply provisions to the royal army when it passed through their territories. *Hiraṇya* seems to have been a payment in cash. In addition to these the peasants had to pay irrigation cesses, to which reference has already been made.

We have seen how customs and ferry dues constituted important sources of income to the state. Taxes were also levied from the guilds of artisans living in the capital (or *durga*), which may imply that the artisans living in the countryside enjoyed exemption. Thus the list of taxes in Maurya times is impressive, and reveals a deliberate attempt on the part of the state to extract as much surplus produce from the people as possible. But, what is remarkable, even these numerous taxes, levied normally, could not meet the mounting expenditure of the state. And hence, although we hear of emergency tax in Pāṇini, for the first time the *Arthaśāstra* provides such taxation measures in great detail. One such measure was the imposition of *praṇaya*, which is interpreted as a gift made out of affection, but this meaning seems to be as illusory as that of the term *bali* in the sense of voluntary offering in Maurya times. *Praṇaya*, however, could be levied only once, and amounted to 1/3rd or 1/4th of the produce according to the nature of soil. Another extraordinary measure laid down by the *Arthaśāstra* is the compulsory raising of a second crop by the cultivators. We learn from Patañjali that the Maurya rulers also derived income from the images of gods. This may have been done either by selling them or establishing them for worship. The latter device was

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recommended by the *Arthaśāstra*. According to the Jain tradition Cāṇakya issued eight hundred million debased silver coins called *kāraṣāpaṇas* to fill the treasury. All these were evidently emergency measures to meet extraordinary situations in Maurya times. Moreover, a major portion of the ordinary taxes seem to have been set apart for this purpose, for the Maurya policy was to deposit half the income as an insurance against emergencies. Had they not followed this policy, the incidence of normal taxation on the people would have been lower. But, as it is, the numerous ordinary and extraordinary taxes, and the undertaking and control of important economic activities of the country, show that the whole economy of the country was geared to the financial needs of the state.

Perhaps most of these taxes were gathered in kind and deposited in the central store-house under the supervision of its superintendent (*koṣṭhāgarādhyakṣa*). But, as would appear from payment to government employees in cash (the highest salary being 48,000 *paṇas* and the lowest 60 *paṇas*) and from the duties of the superintendent of the mint, money economy had made considerable headway. This can be also inferred from several hoards of the punch-marked silver coins, certain types of which are specifically ascribed to Maurya rulers. Nevertheless, further development of money economy was thwarted by the Maurya policy of freezing half of the collected taxes in the treasury and not putting them to any productive use. Moreover, the irksome customs levied on all varities of commodities may have acted as another deterrent to further progress in the Maurya age, which witnessed giant strides in the development of agriculture and the mining industry.

On the one hand the Mauryas created for the first time a well-organised state machinery, which controlled production probably in the middle Gangetic zone. On the other hand their conquests opened the doors for trading and missionary activities on an all-India basis. It seems that the contacts established by administrators, traders, and Jain and Buddhist monks led to the spread of the material culture of the Gangetic basin to the areas situated on the periphery of the empire. If we go by archaeological evidence supplemented by literary references; it would appear that the Maurya economy in the Gangetic basin was based on a wide use of iron, wet paddy production, plenty of punch-marked coins, abundance of beautiful pottery called Northern Black Polished Ware, introduction of burnt bricks and ring wells,

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and above all on the spread of towns in north-eastern India. A Greek writer called Arrian states that it is not possible to record with accuracy the number of cities on account of their multiplicity. Thus the Maurya period witnessed rapid development of material culture in the Gangetic basin. On account of easy access to the rich iron ores of southern Bihar people used more and more of iron implements. We have socketed axes, sickles and also ploughshares of Maurya times. Although arms and weapons were the monopoly of the Maurya state, the use of the other iron tools was not restricted to any class. Their use and manufacture must have spread from the Gangetic basin to the distant parts of the empire. In the Maurya period burnt bricks were used for the first time in the middle Gangetic plains. The Maurya structures made of burnt bricks have been found in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Houses were made of both bricks and timber which was available in plenty because of thick vegetation in ancient times. Megasthenes speaks of the wooden structures at the Maurya capital Pāṭaliputra. Excavations show that logs of wood were also used as an important line of defence against flood and foreign invasion. The use of fire-baked bricks spread in the outlying provinces of the empire. Because of moist climate and heavy rainfall it was not possible to have lasting and large structures made of mud or mud-bricks, as we find in the dry zones. Therefore the diffusion of the use of burnt bricks proved to be a great boon. Eventually it led to the flowering of towns in the different parts of the empire. Similarly the ring wells which appeared first under the Mauryas in the Gangetic basin spread beyond the heart of the empire. Ring wells supplied water to people for domestic use so that it was no longer imperative to found settlements on the banks of rivers. Ring wells also served as soakage-pits in congested settlements.

The elements of the middle Gangetic material culture seem to have been transferred with modification to northern Bengal, Kaliṅga, Āndhra, Karnataka and Maharashtra. In Bangladesh, while we find the Mahāsthana inscription in Bogra district in Maurya Brāhmī, we find NBP at Bangarh in Dinajpur district. NBP sherds have also been found at some places, such as Chandraketugarh in the 24 Parganas, in West Bengal. Gangetic associations can be attributed to settlements at Sisupalgarh in Orissa. These settlements are ascribed to Maurya times in the third century BC, and they contain NBP and iron implements and punch-marked coins. Since Sisupalgarh is situated

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near Dhauli and Jaugada, where Aśokan inscriptions have been found on the ancient highway passing along the eastern coast of India, material culture may have reached this area as a result of contact with Magadha. This contact may have started in the fourth century BC, when the Nandas are said to have conquered Kaliṅga. But it deepened after the conquest of Kaliṅga in the third century BC by Aśoka. Possibly as a measure of pacification after the Kaliṅga war he promoted some settlements in Orissa, which had been incorporated into his empire.

Although we find iron weapons and implements at several places in Āndhra and Karnataka in the Maurya period, the advance of iron technology was the contribution of the megalith builders, who are noted for various kinds of large stone burials including those of a round form. But some of these places have Aśokan inscriptions, NBP, etc., belonging to the third century BC. For example, a few inscriptions of Maurya times have been found at Amaravati, which possibly accounts for the largest number of stratified NBP sherds in peninsular India.[1] Inscribed granite uprights bearing typical Mauryan polish have also been found.[2] Aśokan inscriptions have been found at Erragudi in Āndhra and at several places in Karnataka. It therefore appears that from the eastern coast ingredients of the material culture percolated through Maurya contacts into the lower Deccan plateau.

The art of making steel may have spread through Maurya contacts in some parts of the country. Steel objects belonging to about 200 BC or to an earlier date have been found in the middle Gangetic basin. The spread of semi-steel or steel may have led to the use of better methods of cultivation in Kaliṅga and created conditions for the rise of the Cheti kingdom in that region. In some ways the material content of the Sātavāhana empire was a projection of that of the Maurya empire. The Sātavāhana rulers adopted some of the administrative units of the Mauryas, and in their time Buddhism flourished in the same manner as it did in the heart of the empire of Aśoka.

The existence of inscriptions, occasional NBP potsherds and punch-marked coins in parts of Bangladesh, Orissa, Āndhra, Karnataka and Maharashtra around *c.* 300 BC and later show that in the Maurya period components of the middle Gangetic material culture spread in distant areas. The process seems to be in accord with the in-

[1] *Indian Archaeology 1973—74 A Review*, 4.
[2] ibid.

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structions of Kauṭilya. Kauṭilya advised that newse ttlements should be founded with the help of cultivators, who were apparently vaiśyas, and with that of śūdra labourers who should be drafted from over-populated areas. In order to bring the virgin soil under cultivation, the new peasants were allowed remission in tax and supplied with cattle, seeds and money. The state followed this policy in the hope that it would get back what it had given. Such settlements may have introduced advanced methods of cultivation in backward areas and may have led to the opening of large areas to cultivation and settlement. The Mauryas may also have founded walled urban settlements for keeping garrisons in the outlaying areas. But whatever be the origin of a town eventually it turns into a market andt hus contributes to the economic progress of the region in which it is located.

Probably the Maurya rule facilitated the diffusion of the material culture of the Gangetic basin in the fringes of the tribal belt of central India, extending from Chotanagpur in the east to the Vindhyas in the west. It is pretty clear that Aśoka maintained intimate contacts with the tribal people, who were exhorted to observe dharma. Their contact with the *dharmamāhāmatras* appointed by Aśoka provided opportunities for the transfer of higher culture to them. In this sense Aśoka launched a deliberate and systematic policy of acculturation. He states that as a result of the diffusion of dharma men would mingle with gods. This implies that tribal and other peoples would take to the habits of a settled, taxpaying, peasant society, and develop respect for paternal power, royal authority and for monks, priests and officers who helped enforce this authority. His policy succeeded. Aśoka claims that hunters and fishermen had given up killing and practised dharma. This means that foodgatherers were persuaded to take to a sedentary agricultural life.

II. Small Farms, Money Economy, and Roman Trade (*c.* 200 BC-AD 300)

The state control over all sectors of economy established by the Mauryas did not last for more than a century. In post-Maurya times we no longer hear of state farms worked by slaves and hired labourers under the supervision of the superintendent of agriculture. But land seems to have been mainly in possession of individual farmers. As regards the extension of the area of cultivation, state efforts seem to have been replaced by individual efforts. The *Milinda-pañho* refers to

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the individual who clears the forest and takes other steps for making the land fit for cultivation. And because he brings the land under use, he is called the owner of the land.[1] This is also corroborated by Manu, according to whom sages declare a field to belong to him who cleared away the timber, and a deer to him who first wounded it (IX. 44). Thus theoretically the investment of physical labour in a piece of unclaimed property was supposed to confer on the individual the title to that property. The principle was probably enunciated to give a fillip to the extension of cultivation. This can be also inferred from a passage of Manu, according to which the acceptance of an untilled field by a brāhmaṇa is less blamable than that of a tilled one (X.114). Although, as we shall see presently, the practice of making grants of cultivated land had already come into vogue, the underlying idea of making grants of untilled land to the brāhmaṇas was to make it arable. Gautama (XXVIII. 4) and Manu (IX.III) encourage separate households for brothers on the ground that it increases religious merit; this implies promotion of individual possession of land. The *Divyāvadāna* refers to individual farmers in large numbers working hard and engaged in cultivation.[2]

The subjects of the Sātavāhana rulers possessed land individually, for they could give away plots of land, of varying size to Buddhist monks. But it is doubtful whether they could sell and purchase land for secular purposes. In spite of flourishing money economy we have no instances of the purchase of land by merchants for increasing their own property. Religious grants of land made by them in the Western Deccan suggest that they were counterparts of the great seṭṭhis of the Buddha's time who enjoyed *bhogagāmas*. Whether they purchased land and retired from trade like the Greek merchants, who thus became plutocrats, cannot be said. Since we have no records of sale and purchase of land for secular purposes, this seems to have certainly limited the scope of individual ownership. The merchants and other lay worshippers could freely dispose of their land only for religious purposes.[3]

But it would be wrong to think that the idea of the state ownership was absent. The *Milinda-Pañho* recognizes king's ownership over all the towns, seaports, mines, etc., which are situated on

[1] *Milinda*, Trenckner's ed., 219.
[2] Cowell's ed., 463.
[3] *Lüders' List*, nos. 1,000, 1,024, 1,030, etc.

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the earth.[1] This may indicate general territorial sovereignty. Apparently on account of this authority the king could appoint overlords of villages and *janapadas*.[2] That the state effectively exercised its rights of ownership can be shown from the epigraphs of the Sātavāhana rulers. In India the earliest inscriptional evidence of land grant belongs to the first century BC, when a village was granted by the Sātavāhanas in Maharashtra to the priests as a gift in the *aśvamedha* sacrifice.[3] Such grants were free from taxes, but curiously enough administrative rights were first abandoned by the Sātavāhana ruler Gautamīputra Śātakarṇi (second century AD) in the grant he made to the Buddhist monks in the western Deccan. The land allotted to them could not be entered by royal troops, disturbed by government officials, or interfered with by the district police.[4] Outwardly the grants were intended to fulfil religious obligations, but we have also some evidence to indicate that some grants were meant to get the land cultivated. A Sātavāhana inscription from the western Deccan of AD 130, which grants a plot of royal land to some Buddhist monks, states that if the land is not cultivated the village is not settled.[5] Further, it seems that in most cases the rulers retained their control over some sources of revenues accruing from the land granted by them. The Sātavāhana inscriptions of the second century AD mention the transfer of control only over salt, which implies that the ruler continued to derive income from other sources of revenues such as mines, water reservoirs, etc.

We possess very little information about the land system under the Śakas and Kuṣāṇas, especially under the latter. The most famous ruler Rudradāman (AD 150) claims to have constructed the Sudarśana lake in Saurashtra without having burdened his subjects with forced labour, (*viṣṭi*), benevolences (*praṇaya*) and taxes on their fruits and flowers, implying thereby that the peasants were relieved of these oppressive taxes for the time being. But it also means that all these three had become emergency taxes in post-Maurya times at least in forparts of western India, for according to the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya merly only *praṇaya* was an emergency tax. Further, in Maurya times mainly slaves and hired labourers could be compelled to do forced

[1] p. 359. [2] *Mahāvastu*, Senart's ed., I. 278.
[3] D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, I, 188, line 11.
[4] ibid., 192, 194-95.
[5] *ta ca kheta na kasate so ca gāṃo na vasati*, ibid., 194, 11. 3-4.

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labour, chiefly on state farms. Since these people had no sources of livelihood, they had to be paid to keep themselves alive and working. But in the early centuries of the Christian era in western India the subjects, peasants in general, came to be burdened with forced labour although on special occasions. Thus the Śakas seem to have adopted the old land revenue system with some modifications.

The material available about the land system under the Kuṣāṇas, who ruled from the Oxus to Banaras, is practically next to nothing. We learn from an inscription of about the second century AD that the brāhmaṇas officiating in a sacrifice were given a village, probably in the Allahabad region.[1] Kaniṣka and his several successors were enthusiastic champions of Buddhism, but if they granted land to Buddhist monks these records are not available. This credit goes first to the Sātavāhanas, although they were brāhmaṇas and champions of brāhmaṇism. Probably the Kuṣāṇas introduced the *akṣaya-nīvi* system of land tenure,[2] which implied perpetual endowment of land revenues. In Gupta times such grants generally made in north Bengal by individuals who purchased land according to the necessary legal formalities, and made gifts to brāhmaṇas for increasing their spiritual merit; possibly land granted in this manner was free of taxes. It thus appears that the grant of land according to the *akṣayanīvi* tenure, which became fashionable in Gupta times, had already begun under the Kuṣāṇas in the first two centuries of the Christian era.

Although post-Maurya inscriptions do not refer to grants of land to administrative officers, the law-book of Manu (*c.* AD 200) provides for the assignment of land to revenue officials in charge of one, ten, twenty, a hundred, or a thousand villages.[3] Obviously this piece of land was intended to be a very minor part of the area to be placed under the charge of these officers, who were to enjoy its revenues for their upkeep. We have no means to find out where and how far this rule of Manu was observed. It seems that the officers other than fiscal seem to have been paid in cash by the state.

We have some information about the size of the plots of land in the western Deccan during this period. Some inscriptions refer to the fields of 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 20, and 26 *nivartanas*,[4] one *nivartana* being

[1] *EI*, XXIV, 245-51.
[2] *Sel. Inscrr.*, 146, 11. 1-3, 11-12; 157, 1.1. [3] VII. 115-20.
[4] *Archaeological Survey of Western India*, IV, 96-97.

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roughly equal to an acre and a half. These plots do not necessarily indicate fragmentation of land, except suggesting that there also existed smaller plots of land. We have, however, a reference to a grant of 100 *nivartanas* of land of a royal field,[1] which might suggest a plot of about 150 acres.

No such information is available about the size of plots in northern India. Nevertheless, some inference can be drawn from the irrigation system of the period. Except the extension of an old canal by Khāravela in Kaliṅga and the repair of the Sudarśana lake by Rudradāman in Saurashtra, we do not hear of major irrigation works during this period. Tanks seem to have been constructed by Śaka and Kuṣāṇa chiefs in north-western India, and also by many individuals in U.P. where the practice of offering ritual tanks was popular in the first two centuries of the Christian era. Manu provides for the protection of the house, tank, orchard, and fields of the individuals against seizure by others.[2] Since canals do not seem to have been much in use, in the later half of the post-Maurya period comparatively smaller plots of land had probably come to be the order of the day, and irrigation by wells or tanks may have been employed as an aid to the intensive cultivation of these plots.

During post-Maurya times the state probably enforced laws to protect agriculture, which was apparently disturbed by repeated foreign invasions. Manu enjoins the king to punish people for theft of agricultural implements and provides mutilation for selling false seed corn, for taking up seed already sown, and for destroying boundary marks.[3] Perhaps this was one of the most tangible economic benefits, in return for which the state demanded taxes from the agriculturists. The *Milinda-Pañho* refers to the (*gāmasāmika*) village headman, who summoned all the village householders through his messenger to the front of his house for the purpose of levying taxes from them on the king's behalf.[4]

The state hardly exercised any control over arts and crafts, which witnessed a remarkable growth during this period. We do not come across so many kinds of artisans in the earlier Buddhist texts or the *Arthaśāstra*, as during this period. The *Dīgha Nikāya* mentions nearly two dozen trades,[5] but the *Mahāvastu* gives a list of thirty-six kinds of workers living in the town of Rājagṛha.[6] The list is not exhaustive,

[1]ibid., 106. [2]VIII. 264. [3]IX. 291, 293. [4]p. 147.
[5]PTS, II, 50. [6]Sénart's ed., III. 442-43.

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for it issaid at the end of it that there are others besides these mentioned. The *Milanda-pañho* enumerates as many as seventyfive occupations (p. 331), about sixty of which were connected with various kinds of crafts. Of these, eight crafts were associated with the working of mineral products, gold, silver, lead, tin, copper, brass, iron, and precious stones or jewels (p. 331). A variety of brass (*ārakūṭā*), zinc, antimony, and red arsenic are also mentioned.[1] All this betokens considerable advance and specialization in the working of metals. In particular, technological knowledge about the working of iron had made considerable progress.[2] It is because of this that Indian iron and steel are mentioned in the *Periplus* as imports into the Abysinian ports.

Cloth making, silk weaving, and the making of arms and luxury articles[3] seem to have made progress during this period. Five processes of cloth manufacture were undertaken by Gotamī, the aunt of the Buddha.[4] Mathura had acquired special celebrity for its manufacture of *śāṭaka*, a special kind of cloth.[5] Manu levies taxes on the produce of the weavers, who probably owed their affluence to trade in textiles produced in Mathura. Dyeing was a thriving craft in some South Indian towns. A brick-built dyeing vat has been unearthed at Uraiyur, a suburb of Tiruchirapalli town in Tamil Nadu.[6] Similar dyeing vats were excavated at Arikamedu.[7] These structures belong to the 1st-3rd centuries AD,[8] during which handloom textile industry flourished in these towns. We do not know whether there was any special progress in the manufacture of oil, but the *tailikacakra* or oil wheel is mentioned in the *Divyāvadāna* (p.70). In inscriptions from the western Deccan, Sanchi, Bharhut, Mathura and Bodh Gaya, weavers, goldsmiths, dyers, workers in metal and ivory, jewellers, sculptors, fishermen, smiths, and more frequently perfumers (*gandhika*), figure as donors of caves, pillars, tablets, cisterns, etc., to the Buddhist monks. The craft products of smiths, weavers and ivory workers were also valued for long-distance trade.

[1]ibid., II, 106.

[2]It is stated that even when beaten black iron carries weight and that it does not vomit up the water it has once soaked in (*Milinda*, p. 415).

[3]*Milinda*, 331. [4]ibid., 240. [5]*Patañjali*, I. 1. 2; Kielhorn, I. 19.

[6]*A Decade of Archaeological Studies in South India*, ed. B.K. Gururaja Rao and others (Dharwar, 1978), 7.

[7]ibid. [8]ibid.

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In post-Maurya times we get the earliest epigraphic testimony regarding the existence of the guilds of artisans. Artisans were organized under their headmen, who probably enjoyed the favour of the king.[1] During the second century AD in the Sātavāhana territory money (in silver *paṇas*) was deposited by the lay devotees of Buddhism with the potters, the oil millers and the weavers for the purpose of providing robes and other necessities for the monks.[2] In the same century a sum of money was deposited by a chief with the guild of flour makers at Mathurā, out of the monthly interests of which a hundred brāhmaṇas were to be served daily.[3] Thus the craftsmen organized in guilds could function independently. Evidently they could purchase raw materials and implements with money deposited with them and could pay interest on it out of the proceeds from the sale of their commodities. Literary evidence indicates that the number of guilds had increased during this period. Besides the traditional eighteen guilds the *Mahāvastu* (III, 442 f.) mentions eleven kinds of artisans, all working under their respective heads (II, 463-78). A comparison of the two lists of this text attests the existence of at least two dozen guilds of artisans during this period. Many of these artisans functioned as both producers and small traders. Although the Buddhist texts refer to Rājagṛha and Śākala as centres of arts and crafts, most artisans known from inscriptions were confined to the Mathurā region, the Sanchi-Bharhut area and to the western Deccan where their prosperity was stimulated by the growing trade with Rome.

There is some archaeological evidence for internal trade. In Ayodhya sherds of rouletted ware (typical Roman pottery mainly found in the trans-Vindhyan zone) have been found in levels assignable to the 1st-2nd century AD.[4] This is perhaps the most inland context in which this ware has been found in northern India, and it may well have reached here from Tāmralipti (Tamluk) through the Gaṅgā and then through the Sarayu rivers.[5] Similarly a couple of the sherds of the red polished ware (typical of western India and also of the Kuṣāṇas) with

[1] *Lüders' List*, no. 346.
[2] ibid., nos. 1133, 1137.
[3] *EI*, XXI, no. 10.
[4] Archaeological Survey of India, (Cyclostyled) *Report of the Director General for the years 1974-78*, 25th meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Archaeology, New Delhi, 9 December 1978, 45.
[5] ibid., 45-46.

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incised Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions have been found in the lands belonging to the 1st-3rd centuries AD in Satanikot in Kurnool district,[1] which might indicate trade between Āndhra and northern India. Red polished ware found at several Sātavāhana sites suggests local trade but it may have seen sent to northern India. There are several instances of long-distance trade in glass subjects and semi-precious heads. We have clear evidence of trade contacts between Mathura and Gandhara. The Mathura image of a goddess is made of blue schist of Gandhara and shows the style of Graeco-Buddhist shawl.

From the economic point of view the most important development of the period was the thriving trade between southern India and the Roman empire. In the beginning the major part of this trade seems to have been by land. But the movement of the Śakas, Parthians and Kuṣāṇas which began in the first century BC put an end to this trade. The Parthians of Iran, however, imported iron and steel possibly from China or India. But since the first century AD trade was carried on mainly by sea. The discovery of the monsoon gave a great impetus to this trade. The discovery is attributed to Hippalus in AD 46, but finds of Roman coins in south India in the beginning of the first century AD suggest familiarity with the monsoon at about that time or even a little earlier. The sailors now became armed with better knowledge of navigation, which enabled them to call at the Indian ports of Bhṛgukaccha (Broach), Arikamedu (Pondicherry), and Tāmralipti. But the trade between India and Rome was not carried on in articles of daily or common use. The details show a brisk commerce in luxury goods but no extensive production by large industries.[2] It seems that the Romans mainly imported spices for which south India was famous. They also imported muslins, pearls, and jewel-stones from central and southern India. All this may be taken as constituting 'terminal trade', for these products were directly supplied by India.[3] Besides, there was also some 'transit trade',[4] especially in silk, which, diverted by Parthian hostility from the more direct continental routes, sometimes found its way from China via the east coast of India to the ports of the Malabar coast from where it went to the West.[5] In

[1]ibid., 39.

[2]E.H. Warmington, *Commerce between India and the Roman Empire* (Cambridge, 1928), 300.

[3]Wheeler, *Rome Beyond the Imperial Frontiers*, 164.

[4]ibid. [5]ibid.

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return the Romans exported to India wine-amphorae and red-glazed Arretine ware, which have been discovered in recent excavations at Arikamedu. But, what is more important, the Romans exported to India a large number of coins, invariably of gold and silver. Wheeler reported in the fifties that sixty-eight hoards of Roman coins of the first century AD were unearthed in the sub-continent, and no fewer than fifty-seven came from south of the Vindhyas.[1] By now one hundred and twenty-nine finds of Roman coins have been reported, and most of them have been found in Peninsular India.[2] This justifies the complaint of Pliny who bewails the fact that Rome was being drained of gold on account of her trade with India. The complaint might be exaggerated, but it cannot be dismissed, for Rome had to ban trade in silk, cutlery and other goods which were imported by it from that East.

It has been suggested that the Indians in Peninsular India did not know the use of gold or silver currency,[3] and that, for the most part, the imported coins can only have been used as bullion.[4] But we have some silver coins ascribable to the Andhras, and the epigraphic evidence suggests the use of silver *paṇas*. Hence Roman gold coins may have been valued for their intrinsic worth, but may also have circulated in big transactions. In the North the Greek rulers issued a few gold coins, but the Kuṣāṇas issued them in considerable numbers. It is difficult to subscribe to the theory that all Kuṣāṇa gold coins were minted out of Roman gold. As early as the fifty century BC the Indian satrapy paid a tribute of 320 talents of gold annually to the Persian empire. The source of the metal may have been the gold mines, reported to have existed in Sind in the time of Alexander.[5] This territory and probably the gold mines of Dhalbhum lay under the sway of the Kuṣāṇas, who enjoyed the benefit of the knowledge of melting and mining transmitted by the Mauryas. But on account of contact with Rome they began to issue the *dīnāra* type of gold coins, which became abundant under the Gupta rule. Nevertheless, in day-to-day transactions silver and, especially gold coins, could hardly be used by the people. Patañjali refers to payment in *niṣkas* to the wage-earners

[1]ibid., 165.

[2]Manfied G. Raschkey, *Roman Coin Finds on the Indian subcontinent : A Catalogue and Analysis* (Cyclostyled Paper; place and date not mentioned)

[3]Wheeler, op. cit., 167. [4]ibid.

[5]Strabo, XV. 1. 34 in Hamilton and Falconer, III, 96.

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(*karmakaras*), but these do not seem to have been gold coins at this stage. In this connection the issue of lead or potin coins by the Andhras is significant, for it indicates that in the Deccan and in the coastal area money economy had come to be prevalent. The same inference can be drawn in respect of northern and north-western India from the coinage of the Kuṣāṇas, who perhaps issued the largest number of copper coins. Copper coins were also issued in large quantities by the Nāga rulers, especially Gaṇapati Nāga, and by several indigenous dynasties such as those of the Yaudheyas and the Mitra rulers of Kauśāmbī, Mathurā, Avanti and Ahicchatrā and other dynasties. Kings, 'tribes' and important towns vied with one another in issuing coppers, which, in many cases were bronze coins. All this would suggest that perhaps in no other period had money economy penetrated so deeply into the life of the common people of the towns and suburbs as during this period, a development which fits well with the growth of arts and crafts and the country's flourishing trade with the Roman empire.

Urbanism reached its peak in the first three centuries of the Christian era. We come across a large number of towns which were centres of crafts and commerce. Almost all the Kuṣāṇa[1] and Sātavāhaṇa sites excavated so far show good structures. In the Kuṣāṇa phase we notice some improvement in the making of structures. At several places such as Mathura,[2] and Ganwaria[3] in Basti district in north-eastern Uttar Pradesh, the flooring was made of brick concrete mixed with lime. This indicates the use of *surkhī* which contributed to the stability of structures. Further baked tiles for roofing appear in this period at several places in both the Sātavāhana[4] and Kuṣāṇa[5] zones. These two factors were bound to add to the solidity and longevity of urban structures in the early centuries of the Christian era.

III. Feudal Beginnings (*c.* AD 300-600)

The main interest of the economic history of Gupta age lies not so much in its foreign trade and money economy as in the partial feuda-

[1]Kameshwar Prasad, 'Towns in Kusāna Times', Patna University Ph.D. thesis, 1979.

[2]Archaeological Survey of India, (Cyclostyled) *Report of the Director General for the years 1974-78*, 25th meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Archaeology, New Delhi, 9 December 1979, 20.

[3]ibid., 28. [4]ibid., 38.

[5]*Indian Archaeology 1974-75—A Review* (cyclostyled), pp. I/16, I/117.

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lization of the land system and the rise of local units of production. An important development was the grant of cultivated land to temples and brāhmaṇas in northern and eastern Bengal, and in the eastern part of modern Madhya Pradesh. But the land grants in Madhya Pradesh differed from those in Bengal in two important respects. The Bengal grants were the results of sale transactions effected by individuals and involved the transfer of plots of land, but the central India grants were made by feudatories who gave away villages. The Bengal grants were made with the consent of the officers of the central government and carried immunity from taxes only, but the central India grants provided administrative immunities as well. From the time of the Vākāṭaka King Pravarasena II onwards (fifth century AD) the ruler gave up his control almost over all sources of revenue, including pasturage, hides and charcoal, mines for the production of salt, and all hidden treasures and deposits.[1] Royal ownership of mines, which was an important sign of sovereignty,[2] seems to have been transferred to the brāhmaṇas, who, according to several grants of the fourth and fifth centuries AD, were allowed to enjoy the hidden treasures and deposits of the villages.[3] Equally important was the development that the donor abandoned the right to govern the inhabitants of the villages that were granted. We have at least half a dozen grants of apparently settled villages made to brāhmaṇas by the large feudatories in central India, in which the residents, including cultivators and artisans, were expressly asked by their respective rulers not only to pay customary taxes to the donees but also to obey their commands.[4] Nevertheless, the inscribed charters of the fifth century AD show that the ruler generally retained the right to punish thieves, which was one of the main bases of the state power.

Since the land grants ascribed to Samudra Gupta are dismissed as spurious, we do not have as many cases of grants directly made by the Gupta emperors as by their feudatories in central India. Although the extent of the grants cannot be determined, the Bihar Stone Inscription of Skanda Gupta, dated AD 489, leaves the impression that whole villages were granted by the Gupta emperors on the same terms as their feudatories. In this case we learn that the village was assigned

[1] *Sel. Inscrr.*, I, 422, 11. 26-29.
[2] *Raghuvaṃśa*, XVII. 66.
[3] *CII*, III, 41, 1. i; *Sel. Inscr.*, I, 422, *1*. 29.
[4] *JBRS*, XXXIX, 325.

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as an *agrahāra* according to the *akṣayanīvi* tenure. The Gupta emperors also gave their willing consent to the *akṣayanīvi* grants made by individuals in northern and eastern Bengal, and in eastern Bihar. These grants involved sale and purchase of fields of different size, generally at the rate of two *dīnāras* a *kulyavāpa*, and such transactions could be effected only with the approval of the local council and the local officials of the central government. In these land grants apparently the state was willing to forgo its share of the produce in favour of the brāhmaṇas or temples in consideration of one-sixth of spiritual merit that was supposed to accrue to it on account of land gifts made by individuals.[1]

But many grants made in central India and elsewhere were caused by social and political necessities. Social upheavals indicated by the Kali age descriptions made regular tax collection and its distribution among the priests and others difficult. Hence priests were assigned permanent fiefs not to be entered by the soldiers and officers of the king. It was their direct responsibility to collect rent from the peasants and thus procure their own sources of livelihood. Ordinarily the brāhmaṇas were granted land in return for support to the ruling authority. But some of them might prove refractory. Therefore the grant of Pravarasena II clearly lays down that the thousand brāhmaṇas to whom a village is granted can hold it only on condition that they commit no treason against the kingdom, do not slay brāhmaṇas, do not commit theft and adultery, do not poison kings, do not wage wars, and do no wrong to other villages.[2] Here clearly the object is not to secure the support of the priests, but to prevent them from acting in opposition. Whatever might be the intentions of the donors, i.e. the Gupta emperors, feudatories, and private individuals, the grants helped to create powerful intermediaries, wielding considerable economic and political power. As the number of landowning brāhmaṇas went on increasing, some of them gradually shed their priestly functions and turned their chief attention to the management of land and other secular activities.

The rule of Manu that revenue officials shall be remunerated through land grants is reproduced in the *Śānti Parva* and in a law-book of Gupta times, but is hardly corroborated by any epigraphic evidence. There is some support for this practice in a doubtful rendering of a

[1]The Nandanpur Copper-plate Inscription of Gupta Era 169.
[2]*Sel. Inscr.*, I, 422, II. 40-43.

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passage from Fa-hsien according to which the king's attendants, guards, and retainers all receive 'emoluments',[1] but the term emoluments may not mean land grants in all cases.

It has been suggested that the practice of granting land in Bengal and other parts of India extended the area under cultivation and rural settlement. This may have been true of some plots of land in northern and eastern Bengal and of some villages in Madhya Pradesh, but generally in the Gangetic basin, Gujarat and Maharashtra settled villages and cultivated fields were the objects of gifts. In many cases the order regarding the grant of a village to the priests was conveyed to the brāhmaṇa and the other inhabitants of the village, which shows that the brāhmaṇas were not introduced into the village as pioneering cultivators. Further, the fact that villages and fields were given away together with *udraṅga* and *uparikara*, inclusive of all dues and exempt from all gifts, forced labour and special rights and were not to be entered by soldiers and policemen indicates that these areas were settled. In most land grants of the period, including those in Gujarat and Maharashtra, the terms *aprahata*, *khila*, *bhūmicchidranyāya*, and *avanirandhranyāya*, which denote uncultivated land, were used in a conventional sense. This point has been discussed at some length by the present writer elsewhere.[2]

The practice of land grants led to the fragmentation of land in some parts of the country. In northern Bengal even one and a half *kulyavāpa* of land had to be purchased in smaller plots at four different places.[3] This may have been due to the unwillingness of the people to part with their land, but it also might indicate the scarcity of land and the increasing pressure of population on it. Whatever might be the size of a *kulyavāpa*—suggestions vary from 1 acre to 14 acres—we no longer hear of 500 or 1,000-acre plots of the age of the Buddha or the large state farms of Maurya times. Areas of land mentioned in inscriptions dated in the Kalacuri-Cedi era do not speak for large fields; the same seems to have been the case with the land grants made by the Maitraka rulers of Valabhī in Gujarat.[4] Although sometimes a field of 4 *kulya-vāpas* was available for purchase for making gifts, several gifts were

[1]Ho Chang-chun, 'Fa-hsien's Pilgrimage to Buddhist Countries', *Chinese Literature* (1956), no. 3. 154.

[2]*Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India*, 216-21.

[3]*EI*, XX, 5, ll. 5-11.

[4]K.J. Virji, *Ancient History of Saurashtra*, 246-47, 267 ff.

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made in smaller plots, which not only tended to diminish the size of the existing fields but created new fields of smaller size. The process of partition also contributed to fragmentation. The earlier laws of inheritance, in the law-book of Manu and even in that of Yājñavalkya, never refer to the partition of landed property, which is mentioned for the first time in the codes of Nārada[1] and Bṛhaspati.[2] Thus in the middle or towards the end of the Gupta period large joint peasant families, owning large stretches of land, began to break into smaller units. Once the principle of the partition of land was recognized, the increasing density of population in the fertile river valleys of northern India was bound to accelerate the pace of the fragmentation of cultivable land.

Since the brāhmaṇas possessed many plots of land they were not able to cultivate themselves, although according to some law-books of the period they could legitimately take to cultivation. The terms of transfer show that in many cases fields granted to the brāhmaṇas were not cultivated by them but by temporary peasants. Land charters from the fourth to the sixth century AD in Maharashtra and Gujarat clearly establish that the recipient was given the right of enjoying the land, getting it enjoyed, cultivating it, or getting it cultivated on lease.[3] Some priests may have been the actual tillers of the soil, but certainly temples and monasteries got their land cultivated by others. Fa-hsien states that the monasteries were given fields and gardens with husbandmen and cattle to cultivate them.[4] Inscriptions inform us that sometimes the donees could even replace old peasants by new ones and thus might oust their tenants.[5] Thus by virtue of religious grants priests and temples collected rent from temporary or permanent tenants as the case may be, but retained the whole amount for their maintenance without forwarding any portion of it as revenue to the government treasury, as was the case with the *jāgīrdārs* and *zamīndārs*.

The owners of secular holdings, however, had to pay one-sixth of their produce as revenue, but many of them got their land cultivated by others. It seems that the number of independent and permanent peasant proprietors, who cultivated land themselves and paid their

[1] XIII. 38.
[2] XXVI, 10, 28, 43, 53, and 64.
[3] *CII*, IV, no. 2, l. 6; no. 11, l. 13, etc.
[4] Legge, *A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms*, 43.
[5] *CII*, IV, introduction, clxxi.

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revenues directly to the government, was falling off. Fa-hsien states that only 'those who till the king's land pay a land tax' and that they are free to go and stay as they please.[1] This probably excludes a large number of peasants who did not pay revenues to the state but rent to various kinds of intermediaries, lay and religious. Kauṭilya provides that in new settlements land made fit for cultivation should be given to the peasants by the king,[2] but Yājñavalkya lays down that land should be assigned to the cultivator by the landowner (*kṣtrasvāmī*) and not by the king (*mahīpati*), who, of course, was entitled to the fruits of improvement made on the land in the case of the absence of the owner (*svāmī*).[3] In the organization of land economy Yājñavalkya introduces three stages, namely, *mahīpati* (king), *kṣetrasvāmī* (landowner), and *karṣaka* (cultivator),[4] which is roughly corroborated by Bṛhaspati. The latter lawgiver makes it clear that the *svāmin* formed an intermediate stage between the *rājā* and the actual tiller of the soil.[5] These *svāmīs* or landowners leased out land to temporary cultivators, who were liable to penalties if they neglected cultivation.[6] Thus they lived on rent collected from their tenants. We have no means to determine the extent of land occupied by the different types of intermediaries, but their number was considerable enough to lay the economic basis for the rise of feudalism.

Naturally from his position as supreme landowner the king could grant land to brāhmaṇas and other beneficiaries without any difficulty. Therefore this practice created a class of landlords with titles to the landed property which they did not possess earlier. We notice the emergence of a class with feudal property and with seignorial rights. Such land lords are not found on any scale in the earlier period. In the age of the Buddha we hear of some rich landowners, but they managed their farms with the labour of slaves and agricultural labourers. The state farms of the Mauryas seem to have been similarly managed. We also notice a few brāhmaṇas enjoying the revenues of villages in pre-Maurya and Maurya times. But in Gupta and post-Gupta times the land charters created a considerable class of landed magnates who were given not only the right to collect taxes but also some right to maintain law and order. For example, royal agents

[1]Legge, op. cit., 42-43.
[2]*AŚ*, II. 1. [3]II. 157.
[4]II. 158. [5]XIX. 54-55.
[6]*Yāi.*, II. 157-58; *Bṛhaspati*, XIX, 19, 53-55.

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could not enter the land granted to the brāhmaṇa beneficiary, and the beneficiary could deal with offences against family and property in their area. All this made the religious class of beneficiaries very powerful because, in addition tot heir control over the spiritual and ideological mechanism, they acquired fiscal, economic and administrative rights.

Another important result of the land grants was the erosion of the rights of the peasantry to the land and also the undercutting of communal rights to forests, pastures, fisheries, water reservoirs, etc. The position of the peasantry became servile in both tribal and old caste-dominated areas. In some areas, especially where there was a shortage of labour or of producing population, they were specifically transferred to the beneficiaries, asked to stay in the donated villages and carry out the orders of the new masters; they were also subjected to forced labour, which was occasional and confined only to carrying provisions, military work, road construction, etc. Because of all this the position of the peasantry underwent depreciation. Being men on the spot the beneficiaries could exploit the peasants more effectively, and could encroach on communal resources such as tanks, rivers, pastures, forest, trees, etc., which were enjoyed by the villagers without any check.

Apart from an early start, the Indian feudal formation differs from the European in several other respects. Unlike Europe India did not have a sharply defined class of feudal barons organised in councils and assemblies; not did it have, at least in early stages, much of military feudalism. What is more significant, in the Indian system small-scale peasant plots were not tied to large-scale landlords' plots legally and economically. Feudal landlords in early medieval India did not directly interest themselves in organising the cultivation of large stretches of land. Therefore regular labour service on the farms of the lords were not rendered by the peasants; only casual or occasioual labour service was required for war or construction purposes. In India we do not have serfdom as a common phenomenon, as was the case with Western Europe. We notice however a subject peasantry overburdened with all kinds of taxes and obligations by landed intermediaries. The kind of free peasantry found in the age of the Buddha or in Maurya times seems to have substantially diminished. The economic hallmark of Indian feudalism was the absence of large farms or manors of the landlords and the prevalence of small scale peasant production. The nature of production on a peasant plot was deter-

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mined as much by the needs of his own subsistence as by the rent demands of the beneficiaries. It has to be stressed that in both Europe and India the ever-present beneficiaries claimed from the peasants all kinds of dues on the strength of the royal charters issued to them, but because the peasants were in actual possession of the soil, oxen, and other agricultural accessories, it was bound to give rise to a constant tug-of-war between the new-fangled landlords and the established peasants. But by and large peasant discontent was contained through religious and ideological propaganda. And if still the peasants found the situation unbearable they could move to virgin areas and multiply the existing units of production by founding new villages.

Perhaps the major portion of land continued to be in possession of free peasants, who paid revenues directly to the state. Besides having to pay a fixed portion of their produce as regular revenues to the state, the peasants were subjected to various impositions such as *udraṅga* (frontier tax), *uparikara* (tribute to the divisional officer called *uparika*), and *hiraṇya* (cash payment).[1] Moreover, the villagers had to make not only various kinds of contributions to royal troops and officials when they passed through their areas, but they had also to perform forced labour of all varieties (*sarva-viṣṭi*), probably for military purposes. All this naturally depreciated the position of free peasants.

Local officers were gradually assuming economic power. Vātsyāyana informs us that peasant women were compelled to fill up the granaries of the village headman, take things into or out of his house, clear or decorate his residence, work in his fields, and spin yarn of cotton, wool, flax or hemp for his clothes,[2] so that clothes might be supplied to him locally. Some of the commodities thus produced were also put on sale, apparently to cater for the simple needs of the villagers. The Maurya state regulation of trade and industries was giving way to the management of these affairs by the chiefs of local economic units, independent of the central control.

There is further evidence to show that an important development in Gupta times was the rise of local units of production. Irrigation tended to be a local responsibility. In the Gupta period the repair of the famous Sudarśana lake in Saurashtra was carried out by the local provincial government. But already with the beginning of the Christian

[1]The interpretation of some of these terms is not free from doubt.
[2]V. 5. 5.

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era the local population had begun to take initiative in irrigation. The law-books of Bṛhaspati lay down that the guilds should look after irrigation dams.[1]

Elaborate laws about corporate activities can also be linked with the rise of local and 'autonomous' units of production. The law-books of Gupta times lay down detailed rules regarding partnership in business and functioning of guilds. These corporate bodies not only performed important economic functions such as carrying out joint contracts, plying trade, and receiving money deposits, but also performed judicial and executive functions in relation to their members. Epigraphic evidence of the period shows that the guilds not only issued coins and seals, but also maintained their militia, which, according to the Kalacuri inscriptions, was known as *śreṇibala*. The increasingly autonomous character of the guilds, as virtually independent units of production and political power, can be inferred from the rules which govern the relation between the guilds and the state. The earlier texts enjoin the king to pay respect to the customs of the guilds (*śreṇi-dharma*),[2] but those of the Gupta period instruct the king to enforce the usages prevalent in the guilds.[3] Bṛhaspati lays down that whatever is done by the heads of guild towards other people, in accordance with prescribed regulations, must be approved by the king, for they are declared to be the appointed managers of affairs (XVII. 18). He also warns that if the usages of localities, castes, and families (*kulas*) are not maintained, the people will get discontended and wealth will suffer thereby (I. 126). Thus it seems that the guilds were free to act in whatever manner they liked, and the king was bound to accept their decision.[4] It is true that on certain occasions the king could interfere in the affairs of the guilds. Nārada ordains that the king shall prevent a combination of different guilds, probably of a hostile nature, the arming of these corporations without sufficient grounds, etc. He shall also prevent them from embarking on anti-state or immoral or criminal actions (X. 4-7). But these regulations clearly show that during this period the guilds were considered capable of threatening the authority of the state. Probably some of these guilds dominated the economic life of the towns such as Vaiśālī and Mandasor, and thus functioned as independent units of production.

[1] XVII. 11-12. [2] *Gautama*, XI. 21-22; *Manu*, VIII. 41 and 46.
[3] *Yāj.*, II. 192; cf. I. 361; *Nārada*, X. 2.
[4] R.C. Majumdar, *Corporate Life in Ancient India* (Calcutta, 1918), 62.

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That local units of production were coming into existence can be also inferred from the paucity of coins of common use from the Gupta period onwards. The Indo-Bactrians, and especially the Kuṣāṇas, issued a considerable number of copper coins, which were evidently in common use in the Punjab, and occasionally are found even as far east as Buxar in Bihar, the Gupta emperors did not issue as many copper coins. Thus Fa-hsien seem to have been correct when he stated that cowries formed the common medium of exchange. Even allowing for the fact that copper is more susceptible to corrosion than more precious metals, the comparative scarcity of Gupta copper coins suggests that money economy was becoming weaker at this time. Coins in general become still fewer from the time of Harṣavardhana onwards, which leads us to the conclusion that from the seventh century AD onwards trade suffered a decline and urban life began to disappear, a feature which can be compared with a similar development in Iran.

Reference has been made to the issue of copper coins by several indigenous 'tribes' and dynasties of northern India in post-Maurya times. The *nigamas* or towns also began to issue coins during the post-Maurya and Gupta periods. This practice shows another symptom of the rise of self-sufficient economic units. It accelerated the process of political disintegration, for issuing coins was an important function of the sovereign power. Besides, the issue of seals by Nālandā villages, which glorify themselves as *janapadas* even in Gupta times, indicates that they were emerging not only as politically independent but economically self-sufficient units. At least four such seals were issued from villages, and some were issued by the *nigamas*. Thus territorial units with their base either in towns (*nigama*) or in the country (*janapada*) asserted their identity which may have been a sign of their economic viability.

During this period we notice continuity in the extended and better technical use of metals. The *Amarakośa* furnishes us a long list of commonly used metals. We get two names for bell-metal (*pittala*) (II. 9. 96), four names for lead (II. 9. 105), three names for mica, four names for antimony (II. 9. 100), four names for blue vitriol (II.9.101), three names for vitriol of copper (*rasāñjana*) (ibid., 102), four names for calx of brass (II. 9. 103), five names for yellow orpiment (*haritāla*) (ibid.), five names for red chalk (*śilājatu*) (ibid.,104), seven names for red arsenic (ibid., 108), three names for nitre or saltpetre (ibid., 108),

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and five names for natron or alkali (ibid., 109). Thus these give us not only the names of metals, natural and artificial, but also various kinds of ingredients used in making alloys. Copper, mica, manganese or glass, and mines of which the king was regarded as the owner, are mentioned in the works of Kālidāsa.

From the point of view of common use the most important metal was iron, for according to a Mahāyānist text the *yogi* was permitted the use of earthen or iron pots, but not of gold, silver, bronze, or copper pots. The *Amarakośa* gives seven names for iron and two names for iron rust (II. 9. 98-99). The same text provides five names for ploughshare (II. 9. 13), which may indicate ready supply of this most important agricultural implement and intensive cultivation of land. It seems that during this period there had also taken place some improvement in the ploughshare itself. In connection with the performance of the ordeal ceremony it is stated that the ploughshare, 4 lb. in weight and eight *aṅgulas* or four inches in breadth, was used in cultivation.[1] The weight seems to be reasonable, although the breadth may have been actually less. At any rate this indicates the use of a heavy ploughshare intended for deep ploughing or bringing virgin soil under cultivation. As is evident from the Mehrauli Iron Pillar of Candra, the technical knowledge in iron working had reached its high watermark during this period. The manufacture of bronze articles, which became more abundant from this period onwards, became widespread on account of the increasing and easy use of iron implements. Metal workers formed an important and sizeable class of artisans, but hardly owned metals. It was laid down that a metal worker in iron, copper, lead, tin, silver, or gold, has to pay to the owner of these metals, who gives these to him to prepare utensils from, for the loss in smelting which exceeds the usual loss.[2]

Besides metal workers, we learn of the existence of garland makers, washermen, potters, bricklayers, weavers, tailors, painters, armourers, leather-dressers, blacksmiths, and shell-cutters, for each of whom Amara gives two names (II. 10. 5-10). He, however, gives four names for goldsmiths and five for carpenters (II. 10. 8-9), which shows that their crafts were considered more important in society. The inscriptions show that in central and western India the crafts of silk-weavers and oilmen flourished well, for they were organized in guilds, and

[1] *Bṛhaspati*, IX. 79-80.
[2] Jolly, *Hindu Law and Custom*, 236.

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made endowments for religious purposes. But some silk-weavers had to migrate from Gujarat to Malwa, probably on account of declining demand for their products, and had to give up their profession.

In spite of evidence for arts and crafts foreign trade does not seem to have been as extensive as in post-Maurya times. Trade with Rome, which was the main source of earning bullion for India, was undermined by the Roman reaction against the drain of gold, and was completely stopped because of the barbarian invasions of the Roman and Gupta empires. Trade was, however, revived between India and the Byzantine empire, as we learn from the account of Procopius, and it probably worked in favour of India. As usual the chief article of import by foreign traders was spices, to which we may add silk produced and manufactured in India; for Chinese silk was probably obtained by the Byzantium directly from China rather than through India. The coastal people of southern India carried on trade with the countries of South-East Asia, where they had planted colonies, but this did not seriously affect the economy of the interior of the country. Really the comparative absence of copper coins issued by the central authority during this period shows that there was hardly any easy medium through which the ordinary folk of one town could enter into exchange relations with those of the other. The gold coins issued by the Gupta rulers could be useful only for big transactions such as the sale and purchase of land, in which *dīnāras* were used. Smaller transactions were evidently conducted through the barter system or cowries. It will be therefore fair to hold that Indian economy in Gupta times was largely based on self-sufficient units of production, in villages and towns. The bond of state control which kept these units together in Maurya times and that of copper currency which unified it in post-Maurya times no longer operated during this period. This is, however, not to suggest that production declined. On the other hand agricultural production seems to have shown a substantial rise, conferring peasant status on many śūdras and tribal people enrolled as such.[1]

The decline of trade and petty commodity production is also indicated by the decay of urban sites. Archaeology shows that Kuṣāṇa layers belonging to the first-third centuries AD are very flourishing. The Gupta layers belonging to the 4th, 5th and 6th centuries AD are in a state of decline, and in many cases Kuṣāṇa bricks are used in Gupta structures. In many urban sites habitation disappeared after

[1]R.S. Sharma, *Śūdras in Ancient India* (Delhi, 1958), 234-41.

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the 6th century AD. This is true of a number of sites such as Sanghol in Ludhiana, Purana Qila (Indraprasth), Hastinapura, Mathura, Kauśāmbī, Rajghat (Varanasi), Rajgir, Vaiśālī, Chirand, etc. The same position obtains in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Āndhra. It is significant that *nigama* which earlier meant a town came to mean a village in early medieval times. The post-Gupta age became mainly a period of military camps or *jayaskandhavāras*, from which royal charters were issued. If we take into account all these factors it would appear that marketisation had reached a low ebb and local needs were met by local production. Under such conditions the *jajmānī* system became prominent. Since artisans did not have much scope for the sale of their products in towns they moved to far-off villages where they catered to the needs of the peasants who paid them at harvest time in kind. The *jajmānī* system was reinforced by the charters which insisted on peasants and artisans sticking to their villages.

The present outline of the economic history of ancient India, covering a period of about 3,000 years, would show that changes in economic life were not as swift and rapid as in political life, but they were not altogether absent. We can mark certain well-defined stages in this long history, namely, the urban economy of the Harappa culture; the pastoral and plough-cultivation economy of Vedic times; the wider use of iron, the extensive cultivation of rice, sugar, and cotton, and the rise of towns in pre-Maurya times; the Maurya state control of all sectors of economy; expansion of money economy and thriving trade with the Roman empire in post-Maurya times; and the partial feudalization of land system and the rise of local units of production in Gupta times. Many of these changes could not have been rendered possible without periodical improvements in the tools, implements, and knowledge of production. Social and political imperatives may also have contributed to the process of change. It has been held that in India there has been practically no change in the means of economic production for more than 2,000 years,[1] but as far as ancient India is concerned there can be no basis for such a view. We notice changes in the factors of production as well as in the pattern of distribution.

[1]S.N. Dasgupta, *A History of Sanskrit Literature* (Calcutta, 1947), introduction, xciv.

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CHAPTER XI

Irrigation in the North
(*c.* 200 BC-AD 200)

FOR the study of irrigation in post-Maurya times we do not possess such consolidated literary material as is available in the case of the Maurya period, but references scattered in contemporary sources leave no doubt that the subject continued to be of sufficient importance. A Smṛti verse from the *Ādi Parva*, while discussing the relative value of well, tank, *kratuḥ* sacrifice, son and truth, points out that a tank is a hundred times more important than a well.[1] The law-book of Manu provides that the boundaries between two villages should be determined by tanks, ponds, channels, and other reservoirs of water.[2] Obviously the idea was that these water reservoirs would not only form natural demarcations but would also supply water for irrigation to the adjacent plots of land. Manu also lays down that the boundary should be determined by constant flow of water between two village (*satatamudakasyāgamena*),[3] which probably implies artificial channels always fed by water because even rivers dry up in summer. Further, the brāhmaṇical law-books of the period prescribe very stringent punishments for those who cause any damage to water reservoirs. Manu ordains that one who destroys the embankment of a tank shall be either drowned in water or put to death by beheading.[4] But if the offender repairs the tank, he shall be punished with *uttama sāhasa* (i.e. a fine of 1,000 *paṇas* according to the comm.).[5] Viṣṇu states that the king shall give capital punishment to one who destroys the embankment (*setubhedakān*).[6] This may apply to a dam or the embankment of a pond, a canal, or even a river, the purpose being to preserve water for proper use and to prevent the land from being flooded. It is also provided that one who makes unauthorized use of a tank formerly built for the good of the subjects, or destroys channel of water by raising embankments, shall be punished with the

[1]69. 17-21, 23-28 quoted in *DK*, I, part III (1935).
[2]VIII. 248. [3]VIII. 252. [4]IX. 279. [5]ibid.
[6]V. 15 in *DK*, I, part III (1609).

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first or heaviest fine.[1] The provisions stated above clearly recognise the great utility of tanks, ponds, and other embanked water reservoirs for the welfare of the community.

The general pattern of irrigation seems to have been the same in post-Maurya times as in subsequent times in India, namely by wells, tanks, canals, and rivers. Archaeological excavations have brought to light several terracotta ring wells belonging to the period 600-200 BC. These have been found at Hastinapur[2] New Delhi,[3] Ropar,[4] Ujjain,[5] Mathura,[6] and Nasik.[7] Ring wells have been found at most excavated historical sites in eastern U.P. and Bihar. From the Maurya period onwards they appear to be a common feature in northern India and elsewhere. While some of these ring wells served as soakage pits, others were used as real wells; this was certainly the case with brick wells, for instance, the one which was found at Ujjain.[8] Besides, there is the epigraphic record of Aśoka about the construction of wells at every *kos* along the roads, and of the establishment of numerousd rinking places. Thus the existing archaeological evidence suggests that in the Maurya period and the two centuries succeeding it wells and especially ring wells were constructed in sufficient numbers, but how far they were used for purposes of irrigation is not known. In towns they may have mainly provided drinking water. This seems to be the function of a good number of the ring wells exposed as a result of erosion on the right bank of the Ganga in Patna. The fact that Aśoka established drinking places (*apāna*) in addition to wells might indicate that wells were also used for irrigation.

In post-Maurya times the number of wells seems to have increased on the whole. The solitary ring well of the Period IV (early second century BC to the third century AD) at Hastinapur is, however, taken as suggesting that while the practice of constructing ring wells continued into this period, they were certainly less common than in the preceding one.[9] This may not be true of the entire period of five hund-

[1] *Manu*, IX, 281.
[2] *AI*, nos. 10-11, 16.
[3] *Indian Archaeology 1944-55*, 14. [4] ibid., 7.
[5] *Indian Archaeology 1955-56*, 19.
[6] *Indian Archaeology 1954-55*, 16.
[7] H. D. Sankalia, *Report on the Excavations at Nasik and Jorwe*, 1950-51.
[8] *Indian Archaeology 1956-57*, 27.
[9] B. B. Lal, *AI*, nos. 10-11, 18.

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red years; ring wells have appear to decrease with the beginning of the Christian era. Some ring wells of the post-Maurya strata at Mathura[1] were perhaps used for supplying drinking water to the local population. A well discovered at Saheth has been assigned to the second century AD.[2] At the time of the excavation it yielded sweet and clear water, which was used by the labourers during the course of their work.[3] Epigraphic records from Pakistan refer to the well of Vaşişuga companions in N.W.F. Province, dated 4-3 BC,[4] and to the well constructed by an individual from Puşpapura, in order to confer benefit on himself and the other members of his family, and for the welfare of all beings in the various births.[5] The statement that the well was dug for the good of everybody implies that it was used for providing drinking water as well as for irrigation purposes, but there is no clear evidence of the use of such wells for irrigation. Unless we come across wells situated right in the middle of cultivable land without traces of habitation, we are not in a position to state that these wells were mainly meant for irrigation.[6] There is, however, some indirect literary indication to this effect. Patañjali presents a vivid description of a well-digger, who is covered with particles of earth while excavating, but the hardship suffered thus is more than compensated when he makes use of the water that wells out, for this gives rise to a occasion of great prosperity.[7] This evidently implies that such wells added to the fertility of land by supplying water for irrigation. Again Manu prescribes the lunar penance for wrongfully appropriating the water of wells and small tanks;[8] this may imply that they were meant for irrigation.

We find several records referring to the construction of tanks in post-Maurya times which are not wanting in the earlier period. We learn about the exitence of a large tank embanked by a brick wall and

[1] *Indian Archaeology 1954-55*, 16.
[2] Marshall, *ASR*, 1910-11, 24. [3] ibid.
[4] *CII*, II, Part I, no. 14. II. 1-2.
[5] Sten Konow, 'Āra Stone Inscription of Kaniṣka', *EI*, XIV, 143. This inscription is assigned to AD 119. (D. C. Sircar, op. cit., I, 149).
[6] Some ring wells and numerous *kaccā* wells (in which bricks are not used) are found in small plots of land in the Patna area. Ring wells are also used in parts of Muzaffarpur district.
[7] *bhūyasā ca abhyudayena yogo bhavati*. Kielhorn I, II.
[8] *haraṇe kūpavāpijalānāṃ ca*. XI. 164.

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fed by rain-water through a brickbuilt inlet, assignable to the period *c.* 600-200 BC.[1] On the other hand several tanks belonging to the post-Maurya period have been unearthed in north-western parts, now in Pakistan. There was a small and shallow reservoir for water in the courtyard of the apsidal temple at Sirkap, a Śaka-Parthian city with buildings of the first century AD.[2] To the later part of the same century is ascribed the tank at Dharmarājikā at Taxila.[3] These two tanks were meant for the use of monks and worshippers who paid visits to the sacred shrines of the Buddhists. But another tank which was made by the Greek Theodoros, the Datiaputra, probably in Swat, in honour of all beings, in AD 29 may have also been used for irrigation.[4] The *Milinda-pañho* an important Buddhist text attributed to Menander's time but also containing later material, refers to tanks and ponds (*taḷaka-pokharaṇi*) in the city of Sāgala, modern Sialkot.

Perhaps at ank in Kangra served the cause of irrigation. The Paṭhayār rock inscription, palaeographically considered to be of the early Śaka type, refers to the existence of a pond belonging to Vāyula, the Rāthītara. If Rāthī is identified with Rāṭhī, an agricultural caste in Kangra, we may surmise that the pond was used for agricultural purposes by Vāyula, who was probably the head of the agricultural caste (Rāthītara) in the Paṭhayār area. On the basis of a fragmentary stone inscription in Kharoṣṭhī, as deciphered by Sten Konow,[5] it appears that a pond was constructed by Kṛśakavi, who mentions the name of his father and grandfather, but these cannot be read. In all likelihood, irrigation was the object of several tanks at Mathura, belonging to the first century AD or earlier. Thus the Mathura stone inscription of the time of the Śaka ruler Ṣoḍāsa (*c.* AD 50) informs us that the brāhmaṇa treasurer, of the Śaigrava gotra, constructed a tank, the western bank of the twin tanks and a reservoir.[6] In the course of excavations at Besnagar some fragments of tanks were noticed near the shrine of the platform of Vāsudeva (second century BC)[7], but we do not get any further details about them. A large tank ascribable to around the beginning of the Christian era has been recently unearthed at Sringaverpur

[1] *Indian Archaeology 1954-55*, 9.
[2] Marshall, *Taxila*, I, 155.
[3] ibid., 247.
[4] *CII*, II, part I, no. 24, ll. 1-3.
[5] *CII*, II, part, I, 179.
[6] D. C. Sircar, op. cit., I, 119, ll. 1-8.
[7] *ASR*, 1914, 15, pp. 66-67.

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near Allahabad, but the close proximity of the tank site to the present course of the Ganga makes it difficult to determine its purpose.

Indirect evidence of the popularity of tanks in north-western and northern parts is furnished by the practice of offering ritual tanks, which have been discovered at Taxila, Hastinapur, Udaipur, Ahicchatrā (in Barielly), Kauśāmbī, and Bhiṭā near Allahabad. Fifteen ritual tanks inclusive of fragments have been unearthed from Taxila,[1] many of which are generally assigned to the first century AD.[2] Undoubtedly most of these belong to our period although some are assigned by Marshall to the third-second century BC.[3] About half a dozen votive tanks appear in Hastinapur in about the first century AD, when they also come into vogue in Taxila, Kauśāmbī, and Ahicchatrā.[4] A terra-cotta votive tank of the pre-Kuṣāṇa period has been discovered in a broken condition from Rājā-Karaṇa-kā-Kilā at Thaneser, and bears close similarity to analogous finds from other places in north India.[5] In the village of Ahar in Udaipur, votive tanks were a feature of the upper culture, probably contemporaneous with Kuṣāṇa times.[6] Several specimens of votive tanks have been discovered at Ahicchatrā, ascribable to the period *c.* AD 100-200.[7] It has been argued that these votive tanks suggest Parthian or Indo-Parthian analogues,[8] but Marshall's contention that these tanks were essentially Indian in character cannot be brushed aside lightly. He noticed some broken tank-shrines of the same kind as found at Taxila as far as Bhiṭā near Allahabad—in the heart of Hindustan, where the Parthians never penetrated. Further, he points out that idols in the tank-shrines were familiar in India from pre-historic times onwards.[9] It is also significant that tank irrigation became typical of south India. Water reservoirs are mentioned in land charters from almost all parts of country including Bihar and Bengal, where they are mainly used as fisheries. Wherever might be the origin of the votive tanks, the common practice of offering them obviously indicates the great importance which was attached to the construction of tanks in western Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana, the Punjab

[1]Marshall, *Taxila*, II, 463.
[2]ibid., I, 104, 145, 180.
[3]ibid., 463-64.
[4]*AI*, nos. 10-11, pp. 18-19.
[5]*IHQ*, XXXI, 307-8.
[6]*Indian Archaeology 1954-55*, 14.
[7]*AI*, no. 4, p. 125, plates.
[8]ibid. [9]*Taxila*, II, 467-68.

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and a major part of Pakistan—precisely the areas where irrigation was necessary. It seems that construction of tanks for the well-being of the community was considered an act of great religious merit. But as this was not possible in the case of ordinary folk, they contented themselves with making ceremonial offerings of imitation tanks. This ritual became common in medieval times and continues till today.

Evidence for the existence of tanks during this period is also found in Kaliṅga and the adjacent areas of West Bengal. The Hāthīgumphā inscription tells us about the repair and enclosing of a tank in Kaliṅga Nagarī by Khāravela.[1] Barua reads the relevant passage as *gabhīra-sītala-taḍāga* and points out that the deep cool tanks served as reservoirs of water for drinking, bathing, and washing purposes.[2] The purpose of a brick-built stepped tank at Tamluk, belonging to the first-second centuries AD, is not known,[3] but may have been the same as that of tanks in Kaliṅga because Tamluk was an important port-town carrying on trade with Rome.

Epigraphic records show that several tanks were constructed in western and south-western India during the second century AD. The Junāgaḍh inscription of the Śaka ruler Rudradāman (AD 150) narrates the history of the Sudarśana lake in Saurāṣṭra. According to it the lake was originally constructed by the vaiśya *rāṣṭriya* Puṣyagupta under Candragupta Maurya, and maintained by Aśoka's governor Yavana *rājā* Tuṣāṣpa. (l.8). There is no information about the fortunes of the lake for about another four hundred years. But we learn that in the time of Rudradāman the dam of the lake burst because of the over-whelming flood and onrush of the rivers Suvarṇarekhā, Palāśini, etc. (ll. 5-6), and was repaired under the supervision of the Śaka ruler's governor, the Parthian *amātya* Suviśākha, son of Kulaipa (l. 19). It was a major repair, for the breach was 420 cubits long and 75 cubits deep (ll. 7-8), but now the embankment was made three times more durable (*triguṇa dṛḍhatara*, l. 16). Rudradāman's achievement seems to have been all the more creditable, for he accomplished this public work by spending enormous wealth out of the treasury accumulation, without burdening his subjects with taxes, forced labour, and emergency impositions (l. 16). Through the repair of the tanks he dispelled the widespread despair among his subjects (l. 18) and brought

[1]Sircar, op. cit., 207, l. 3.
[2]Barua, *Old Brāhmī Inscriptions* (Calcutta, 1929), 288.
[3]*Indian Archaeology 1954-55*, 20.

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much needed relief to the people by preserving its water, accumulated through rains and floods, for the irrigation of the neighbouring lands. In one sense the Junāgaḍh inscription of Rudradāman is a very remarkable record. Usually early inscriptions display historical sense (mainly chronological) only in recounting conquests and compiling genealogical tables, but this is a singular case which helps us to reconstruct the history of a lake and thereby testifies to the enormous importance given to irrigation in this area. The tradition of constructing tanks in western India was maintained under the successors of Rudradāman. The Ābhīra *senāpati* Rudrabhūti, who was in the service of the Śaka ruler Rudrasiṃha, constructed a tank in a village in Kathiawad in AD 181.[1] The object of this construction was to achieve the welfare of all human beings,[2] which may imply irrigation. Further south in western India, the Nasik cave inscription of the time of Nahapāna (*c.* AD 119-24) describes his son-in-law Uṣavadāta as a builder of tanks and water-reservoirs.[3] Still further south, an inscription of about the first or second century AD from North Kanara District,[4] refers to the minister Skandasvāti who acted as the superintendent of work relating to gifts, i.e. a Nāga, a tank, and a monastery made by the Mahābhojī Śivaskandanāgaśrī, the daughter of the great king of Banavāsi.[5]

The *Lüders' List* of inscriptions mentions numerous *poḍhis* or cisterns donated by bankers and other individuals to Buddhist monks in western India during the time of the Sātavāhanas, but they cannot be regarded as tanks or reservoirs fit for purposes of irrigation; they were meant either for supplying drinking water, or for bathing. An example of the latter kind is provided by the bathing tank of the householder and banker Vasula.[6]

Most of the tanks known from excavations and inscriptions seem to have been constructed during the first two centuries of the Christian era, when the Kuṣāṇas ruled over an empire extending from Khorasan in the north-west to Bihar in the south-east. The excavations of S.P. Tolstov in Khorasan have brought to light canals assignable to Kuṣāṇa times, i.e. to the first three centuries of the

[1]Sircar, op. cit., I, 176, ll. 5-5.
[2]ibid., 1-5.
[3]*taḍāga-udapāna-kareṇa*. ibid., I, 161, l. 2.
[4]Fleet, *JRAS*, 1905, p. 304.
[5]*IA*, XIV, 334.
[6]*Lüders' List*, no. 1,056.

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Christian era.[1] But archaeology relating to the Kuṣāṇa period in India does not know of any canals so far. The canals brought to light by archaeology belong to the Maurya period or to the two centuries preceding the Christian era. At Kumrahar, a canal 45 feet broad, 10 feet deep, and traced up to the length of about 450 feet is assigned to the Maurya period,[2] and it is suggested that this canal was probably connected with the Son, and then with the Gaṅgā, for bringing monolithic pillars from the Chunar quarries.[3] We can only guess that this canal may have been used for irrigation purposes. The Hāthīgumphā inscription of Khāravela informs us about the existence of a *tivasasata* year old canal in Kaliṅga Nagarī (1.6). The term *tivasasata* has been interpreted both as three hundred and a hundred and three years. On the basis of the second interpretation the original construction of the canal may be ascribed to the end of the Maurya period provided we accept the position that palaeographically the Hāthīgumphā inscription belongs to the first century BC. Khāravela claims to have extended the old canal. His inscription records that in the fifth year of his reign he caused the canal opened by King Nanda, a hundred and three years back, to be brought into the capital from the Taṁśūli road, and caused to be dug at the cost of a hundred thousand coins.[4] Obviously this costly work was accomplished by Khāravela in order to facilitate communication and irrigation.[5] Traces of a similarly old canal have been found at Besnagar near the ancient city of Vidiśā in Madhya Pradesh. In the course of his excavations at this place in 1914-15 D.R. Bhandarkar discovered certain walls which, in his opinion, were the remnants of an irrigation canal.[6] Compared with the Maurya canal at Kumrahar it was smaller in size. At the excavated site the canal was seven feet broad, and the walls were five feet and six inches high. One limb of the canal, represented by the north and south walls, was 185 feet and 4 inches long.[7] Bhandarkar adds that the canal probably extended as far as the Beś river, hardly two furlongs from the site, for this alone could have supplied water to the canal. He thinks it highly probable that the river Beś was originally

[1]Rāhula Sāṅkṛtyāyana, *Madhya-Asia kā itihāsa*, I, 161.

[2]*Indian Archaeology 1954-55*, 19; *Kumrahar Excavation Report* (in press), 24 (shown to me by the courtesy of Dr A. S. Altekar).

[3]ibid. [4]Barua, *Old Brāhmi Inscriptions*, 43.

[5]ibid., 290.

[6]*ASR*, 1914-15, 69; plate XLIX.

[7]ibid., 70-71.

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dammed (at the present ford) and its water carried on to irrigate fields, the east or right bank occupied by the ancient town of Vidiśā. According to him the present canal may have been a storage canal. In our opinion the canal at Besnagar may have been an inundation canal, for rivers in central India overflow their banks in rainy season and dry up in summer. Bhandarkar thinks that the canal was in use prior to 165 BC, and may have been Maurya or possibly pre-Maurya in origin.[2] Thus the two canals, described above, were constructed in Maurya times and continued to be in use afterwards; the canal in Kalinga was extended by Khāravela, but we still need solid proof of the construction of new canals during our period.

Nevertheless, some literary evidence points to the use of water channels in post-Maurya times. Thus Patañjali speaks of canals for irrigating fields.[3] His references suggest the existence of small channels for conserving rain-water and carrying it to the paddy fields. The use of the term *kusūla* in the *Mahābhāṣya* is interpreted to mean that each paddy field was enclosed by a dyke.[4] Although the term *kuśūla* or *kusūla* is commonly used in the sense of granary,[5] in a reference from Patañjali it appears in the sense of a dyke; we hear of the breaking down of the *kuśūla* which was built recently when there were neither rains nor winds.[6] But we cannot say whether the small channels were fed by some big permanent canal. Manu's references to *prasravaṇāni* and *satatamudakāgama* might indicate some channels or rivers for irrigation purposes.[7] His other provision that the brāhmaṇas who divert water courses or take delight in obstructing them shall be punished clearly implies the use of water channels by these people for their own selfish ends.

On account of the comparative inadequacy of the artificial means for irrigation the chief hope of the peasants lay in the inundation of their land by the flooded rivers during the rainy season. Some indication of this is to be found in a grammatical illustration which informs us that the banks of the Devikā river were specially suitable for

[1]ibid. [2]ibid., 70.

[3]*śālyartham kulyāḥ praṇīyante, tābhyaśca pānīyam pīyate upaspṛśya ca śālyaśca bhāvyante*. Kielhorn, I, 82; 276; III, 39.

[4]D. K. Kanjilal. *IHQ*, XXXI, 376.

[5]*bhidyamānaḥ kusūlaḥ pātraṇi bhinatti*. Kielhorn, II, 66.

[6]*nivāte nirabhivarṣe acirakālakṛtaḥ*. Kielhorn, II, 67.

[7]VIII, 248, 252.

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growing paddy crops.[1] This was particularly true of the middle Gaṅgā basin, which was watered by the Gaṅgā and its tributaries. The plains of this region are also favoured with adequate rains. All this accounts for the comparative paucity of wells, tanks, and canals for irrigation in this area.

The information about the organizational aspect of irrigation in post-Maurya times is scanty. The *Arthaśāstra* rules regarding the different rates of irrigation cess give some idea of the measures undertaken by the Maurya state for irrigation, but they are mainly concerned with the sources of income from this important activity. Kauṭilya does not consider irrigation so important as to warrant the provision of a separate superintendent for it; this work was done by the *sītādhyakṣā* or the superintendent of agriculture. In post-Maurya times the concern of the state for irrigation appears here and there. Some independent regional rules, such as Khāravela and Rudradāman, and ministers such as Skandasvāti in the North Kanara District and Suviśākha in Saurāṣṭra, were alive to their responsibility towards the irrigation of the land under their control. A passage in the Junāgaḍh inscription of Rudradāman seems to suggest that irrigation works were commonly executed by the state through the imposition of taxes, forced labour, and emergency levies on the peasants[2] although the Śaka ruler did not resort to these practices. It is curious that irrigation cess, which is considered an important item of revenue in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya,[3] does not figure in the long list of taxes from which brāhmaṇas or beneficiaries are granted exemption in post-Maurya and Gupta inscriptions. The absence of irrigation taxes in later times can be explained in two ways. First, the state generally ceased to bear the main responsibility for irrigation and consequently could not claim any cess for that reason, as it did in the Maurya period. Secondly, whatever irrigation work was undertaken by the rulers was accomplished through occasional levies from peasants; such work did not justify any regular payment.

Initiative for constructing tanks and ponds was also shown by individuals, for we have Manu's laws against the seizure of house, tank, orchards, and fields by others.[4] The inclusion of tank in this list

[1] *devikākulāḥ śālayaḥ*. Kielhorn, III, 316.
[2] *apīḍayitvā kara-viṣṭi-praṇayakriyābhiḥ paurajānapadaṃ janam*, I. 16.
[3] *ĀŚ*, II. 24. [4] *gṛham taḍāgamārāmaṃ kṣetraṃ*. VIII. 264.

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signifies that these were owned and constructed by individuals for irrigation purposes. Clear evidence on this point is provided by another injunction of Manu, according to which, amongst other things, selling one's tank, garden, wife, or child is declared a sin to be expiated by a penance.[1] Manu's references to individual possession of tanks belong probably to *c.* 200 AD or to a later date. In the fourth and fifth centuries AD the law-books indicate individual proprietorship of land, which is linked with the ownership of tanks. Probably tanks dug and owned by individuals may have been smaller in size. We have also clear indications of co-operative efforts made by the villagers in matters concerning irrigation. Manu lays down that if a villager fails to do his best in the case of breach in the embankment of water courses, the king shall banish him out of the village bag and baggage.[2] This not only shows the obligation of the state to preserve embankments but also implies collective endeavours by the villagers for the construction of embankments, irrigation works, etc., under the aegis of the state.

The initial outlay on the construction of a canal is beyond the means of an individual, and hence it can be dug either by co-operative efforts, of which there is not much proof, or by the state. In contrast to the tank, a canal can cater to the needs of a larger area and therefore presupposes co-operative efforts on the part of a village community or small political units. Once canal water is made available bigger plots can be irrigated with less labour, and several villages can enjoy the benefits. Tanks can be constructed with less effort but can benefit only a fewer cultivators. On this showing we can suggest two features of the economic and political organization under the Kuṣāṇas. The comparative dearth of irrigation by canals in the first two centuries of the Christian era implies that generally smaller plots of land had come to be the order of the day. Tank-or well-irrigation may have been employed as an aid to the intensive cultivation of these plots. Intensive cultivation was necessary in the countryside surrounding the towns, for foodgrains could not be easily brought from long distances. Epigraphs and excavations show the largest number of thriving towns under the Kuṣāṇas and Sātavāhanas. Some of them such as Mathura may have been based on trade, local or long-distance, but most of them seem to have been fed by their rural neighbourhood in which a good deal of cultivation depend on tanks and wells. Again, the

[1] XI. 62. [2] IX. 274.

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scarcity of canals or any large irrigation work in northern India under the Kuṣāṇas might suggest that centralized political organization did not play any important role in providing irrigation.

The technical aspect of irrigation works is practically obscure. We have some idea about the materials which were used in the construction of tanks. Embankments seem to have been made of earthworks although in the case of a tank at Dharmarājikā at Taxila walls were made of the rubble masonry, the whole coated with plaster, in order that water may not percolate into the land.[1] Generally the steps in the tanks were made of bricks, as in the case of the tank in Tamluk.[2] The canal at Kumrahar or the one in Kaliṅga does not give any indication of brick walls, but the canal at Besnagar was enclosed by brick walls, in which lime mortar, rivalling that of the Romans, was used.[3] The object of having such strong brick walls was to store water for permanent use.[4] But in general the embankments and enclosures of tanks and canals seem to have been made of earthworks. Although the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya enumerates several devices for raising water and irrigating fields, we have very little idea of such contrivances in post-Maurya times. The Nasik Buddhist cave inscription of the time of Māḍharīputra Īśvarasena, an Ābhīra ruler, refers to *odyaṃtrikas*, who have been taken as a guild of the workers fabricating hydraulic engines.[5] Whether these engines had anything to do with raising water for irrigation cannot be definitely said, but the possibility cannot be ruled out. We may assume that the simplest method of raising water from a well or a small water reservoir was used. It amounted to lifting one bucket of water at a time; whether iron buckets were used we do not know. It is clear that the various types of the 'Persian wheel' operated through animal power (mainly ox) were not known at this stage.

[1] Marshall, *Taxila*, I, 247. [2] *Indian Archaeology 1954-55*, p. 20.
[3] *ASR*, 1914-15, p. 69. [4] ibid.
[5] *Lüders' List*, no. 1,137.

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CHAPTER XII

Trends in the Economic History of Mathura
(*c.* 300 BC-AD 300)

EVIDENCE from Pali texts and archaeology suggests that Mathura was a considerable settlement in Maurya times. North Black Polished (NBP) ware sherds have been found in excavations at Mathura and Sonkh and also in explorations at several places in Mathura district. Although settlements at Mathura had started around the sixth century BC with the people who used Painted Grey Ware, they became substantial by *c.* 300 BC. But coins, inscriptions and archaeology show that the real importance of Mathurā as an urban centre started in the first century AD; about this time we find brick structures, roofing tiles, fortifications, etc.[1] Mathura became a great centre of trade and crafts and of religion and administration in the first two Christian centuries in the Saka-Kuṣāṇa phase.

The great economic importance of Mathura was not derived from its hinterland or from the resources of that region.[2] It has a desert type of climate.[3] Sandholes and ravines mark the bank of the Yamuna, and cultivation on the banks bordering the ravines is poor.[4] At Mathura the annual average rainfall is 21.43".[5] Except during the brief south-west monsoon season the air over the district is generally dry.[6] The Mathura soil is good for excavators but bad for cultivators. However, the land adjacent to the Yamuna is quite often very fertile,[7] but still irrigation is needed for the major part of the district. Till recent times a good part was irrigated by the *rahaṭ* or the Persian wheel system, but this contrivance was not known in the early centuries of the Christian era.

Although the district is a part of the Indo-Gangetic alluvium,[8] be-

[1] *Indian Archaeology 1974-75—A Review*, p. 50; ibid., 1975-76, p. 55.
[2] *Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers*, (Mathura, 1968), 5-6.
[3] ibid., 6. [4] ibid., 7. [5] ibid., 9.
[6] ibid., 10. [7] ibid., 6. [8] ibid., 8.

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cause of less rainfall it was not capable of producing much in ancient times. Probably it produced wheat, barley, millet, rice and pulses, but whether the rural base of Mathura was strong enough to support its urban settlement is doubtful. Mathura, however, is famous for its *tamāla* trees, and according to the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* spices in the form of green leaves were imported from India.[1] According to Wilfred H. Schoff the imported spice is the leaf of the *tamāla* tree, which is a variety of cinnamon or laurel.[2] Mathura may have contributed to the export of this spice from India. The mention of *cūtaka vihāra* suggests that Mathura also produced mangoes. Probably the Mathura artisans produced some luxury and essential goods for local use and export. Otherwise it is very unlikely that the natural resources/products of Mathura enabled it to pay its way.

We have no idea about the land system or the agricultural methods prevalent in the Mathura region. Finds of votive tanks in excavations and numerous references to the construction of wells, tanks and water reservoirs for religious purposes in inscriptions[3] suggests that the practice of providing water facilities may have also been followed in the countryside where it promoted the supply of water for both drinking and irrigation. Such facilities may have been organised individually or collectively; the state does not seem to have played any important part in it.

While some land grants were made by the Sātavāhanas in Maharashtra, none seems to have been made by the Kuṣāṇas unless it is understood in terms of indirect grant of land for the construction of monasteries, tanks, reservoirs, etc. The term *akṣayanīvi*, which indicates perpetual land tenure in a Sātavāhana inscription, is used in a Kuṣāṇa epigraph from Mathura,[4] but not in the context of land grant. In villages headmen seem to have been men of importance, and the *grāmika* is mentioned in two Mathura inscriptions[5] and one of them had more than one wife.[6] Probably he assessed and collected taxes from the peasants, as was the case with the *gāmasāmika*, mentioned in the

[1]P.H.L. Eggermont, "The Muruṇḍas and the Ancient Trade-Route from Taxila to Ujjain," *JESHO*, IX (1966), 278-79.
[2]ibid., 279.
[3]*Lüders' List*, nos. 64, 82, 102; Agarwala, in *JUPHS*, XXII, 204; XXIII, p. 75.
[4]*Sel. Inscrr.*, I, 207, 1.2; ibid., 152. ll.3, 11-12; p. 157, 1.1.
[5]*Lüders' List*, nos. 48, 69a.
[6]ibid , no. 48.

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Milinda-pañho.[1] Possibly he collected from the peasants *praṇaya*, *viṣṭi*, and taxes levied on their fruits and flowers from which they were exempted by Rudradāman in the construction of the Sudarśana lake. At any rate he may have collected the royal share of the produce. According to Agarwala *kālavāḍa* or *kārapāla*, collector of taxes, mentioned as one of the donors at Mathura, was an official of high rank whose title was in vogue even before the rise of the Kuṣāṇas.[2] It seems that in the Mathura region or in northern India there was hardly any class of landed intermediaries between the state and the peasants during the period we are considering.

An overall view of Mathura and whatever we can infer about its resources and its land system would show that it did not enjoy any special advantage from the agrarian point of view. The carrying capacity of its soil was poor. We have no means to show that taxes collected from the peasants were sufficient to maintain administrative and other establishments at this place during the Saka or the Kuṣāṇa regime. In spite of this, archaeology and other sources of evidence indicate continuous progress of Mathura in structure and artifacts from the 3rd century BC to the 3rd century AD. How did this happen? Mathura obviously owed all this to its pivotal position as a great clearing house of commodities, for it was well connected with Central Asia through the north-western route and also with the western coast through the Ujjain route. It was certainly situated at the centre of four cross-roads,[3] if not several more as pointed out by S. G. Bajpai.[4] The merchants undoubtedly played a significant role in the economic life of the city. Known by different terms such as *vaṇik*, *śreṣṭhin*, *sārthavāha*, *vyavahārin*, etc., at least twelve merchants are mentioned as donors in inscriptions from Mathura.[5] If we add the number of several *gandhikas*[6] (literally perfumers but generally merchants) the total number would reach seventeen. The merchants were rich enough to set up

[1]Trenckner's edn, 147.
[2]*JUPHS*, XXIII, no. E, 147.
[3]Eggermont, op. cit., 293.
[4]Shiva G. Bajpai, *Mathura: Trade Routes, Commerce, and Communication Patterns from the Post-Mauryan Period to the End of the Kuṣāṇa Period*, paper presented to the Seminar on Mathura in New Delhi, January 1980.
[5]V.S. Agarwala, in *JUPHS*, XXXI, no. 121, p. 65; *Lüders' List*, no. 140, Addition and Correction, nos. 105, 24, 41; *MI*, nos. 44, 65, 172, etc.
[6]*Lüders' List*, nos. 37, 39, 68, 76; V.S. Agarwala, in *JUPHS*, XXIII, no. B2 (p. 39), 1.2.

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their monastery,[1] so were the goldsmiths[2] or *sauvarṇikas*, who are repeatedly mentioned.[3] All types of jewellery are profusely represented in sculptures.[4] We notice earnings, bracelet, double bracelet, necklace, double necklace, breast jewel, bangle, anklet, torque, bangles including the heavy ones, armlets, wristlets, crown, amulet string, ear-pendants, and metallic chain.[5] But earrings, bracelet and necklace figure commonly.[6] A gold leaf has been discovered at Sonkh. Apparently all this accounts for the importance of goldsmiths, who, as artisans and merchants, served the needs of the upper crust of society.

This brings us to the question of semi-precious stones and possibly art objects. Fine textiles were produced in Mathura which was famous for its *śāṭaka*,[7] a special kind of cloth. But in the period under review Mathura also traded in some essential commodities. We frequently come across ironmongers,[8] suggesting thereby that agricultural implements needed by the ordinary folk in the countryside were manufactured and supplied by them although war weapons which are so frequently represented in sculptures and also in coins may have received priority in trade.

We may consider long-distance the nature of trade in the Mathura region. Much of trade seems to have included luxury and prestige objects. Trade in silk, when temporarily disturbed on the Central Asian route, was diverted to the eastern part of the Roman empire via Broach through the *uttarāpatha* which touched Mathura and from where goods went to the western coast via Vidisa, Ujjain. We hear of horse-dealers from Taxila passing through Mathura.[9] In addition to this the merchants of Mathura may have participated in trade in ivory objects, glass goods, semi-precious stones and possibly in art objects.

Six types of lances,[10] six types of swords,[11] various types of sheaths,[12] three types of shields,[13] and five types of daggers[14] are known from the

[1]*Lüders' List*, Additions and Corrections, no. 140, p. 174.
[2]V.S. Agarwala, in *JUPHS*, XXII, no. 260. p. 193,
[3]*Lüders' List*, nos. 95, 150, 168.
[4]V.S. Agarwala, in *JUPHS*, XXI-XXIII.
[5]ibid. [6]ibid.
[7]Patañjali, I. 1.2; Kielhorn, I.19.
[8]*Lüders' List*, nos. 29, 53[& 54.
[9]Eggermont, op. cit., p. 293.
[10]N P. Joshi, *Life in Uttarāpatha*, 256, 259.
[11]ibid. [12]ibid., 261, 263.
[13]i bid., 263. [14]ibid., 264.

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sculptures of the period. These sculptures obviously belong to the 2nd century BC-2nd century AD. In addition to these numerous weapons of the period are mentioned in ch. IX of *Life* by N.P. Joshi. Vogel[1] and V.S. Agarwala[2] refer to many swords, spears, daggers, etc. Thus sculptures suggest that weapon-making was a thriving industry, and inscriptions indicate that blacksmiths and traders in iron objects were an important group, and their activities may have something to do with the steel goods that were sent to Rome where there was a complaint on waste of gold in purchasing the Indian cutlery. There also seems to have been some trade in brass goods at Mathura. A piece of brass rod, and brass hook, have been found,[3] and we also get a reference to brass scissors meant for cutting arecanuts.[4] But still even in the houses of upper class people pottery was not replaced by brass bronze utensils for eating and cooking purposes.

Numerous representations of tunics,[5] trousers,[6] scarfs,[7] shawls,[8] draperies,[9] turban, head dresses,[10] etc., in sculptures might suggest the needs of soldiers and upper class of society, but representations of *dhotīs*[11] and *sārīs*[12] suggest that the needs of the common people in the

[1]Vogel, *AMM*, C no. F. 27 (p. 199), C no. F. 1 (p. 111), C no. F. 13 (p. 145), C no. E. 13 (p. 108), C no. 73 (p. 112), C no. 732 (p. 116).

[2]*JUPHS*, XXII, no. 1022 (p. 140), no. 1579 (p. 140), no. 592 (p. 152), no. 724 (p. 152), no. 2028 (p. 152), no. 899 (p. 158), no. 738 (p. 160), no. 739 (p. 161), no. 126 (p. 161), no. 604 (p. 165), no. 739 (p. 161), no. 126 (p. 161), no. 604 (p. 165), no. 739 (p. 205), no 1244 (p. 205), no. D 46 (p. 167), no. 269 (p. 167), no. 894 (p. 168), no. 936 (p. 168), no. 938 (p. 168), no. 100 (p. 168).

[3]Agarwala, in *JUPHS*, XXI, no. 2799 (p. 79).

[4]Vogel, *AMM* C no. V. 31 (p. 202).

[5]K.D. Bajpai, in *JUPHS*, XXI, no. 12, p. 127. Many examples of tunic have been quoted by Vogel and Agarwala.

[6]Agarwala, in *JUPHS*, XXI, pp. 43, 66; XXII, pp. 129, 167, 174, 195; Vogel, *AMM*, pp. 84, 94, 110.

[7]Agarwala, in *JUPHS*, XXI, no. 485 (p. 67), no. 746 (p. 69), no. 1366 (p. 72), no. 1410 (p. 72), no. 2739 (p. 75), no. 2798 (p. 77). Several instances are quoted in *JUPHS*, XXII also. Other examples are given by Vogel in *AMM*, pp. 112-14, 137, 141-42, 144-48, 153.

[8]Vogel, *AMM*, C no. E. 21 (p. 110), C no. 22 (p. 110), C no. 226 (p. 121).

[9]Agarwala, in *JUPHS*, XXI, pp. 64, 66, 68-9, 71-4, 77.

[10]ibid., pp. 67, 70-1; Vogel, *AMM*, pp. 113-16, 120-21, 124, etc.

[11]There are more than a dozen references to *dhotī* in Vogel, *AMM*, pp. 56-8, 62, 64, 83, 88, 90-9, etc. Agarwala makes seven references to it in *JUPHS*, XXI, pp. 47, 67, 69-72, 75, 127, 142.

[12]K.D. Bajpai, in *JUPHS*, XXI, no. 3, p. 119.

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city were not ignored. We also hear of cotton-dealers.[1] Similarly the existence of the guild of flour-makers[2] suggests that wheat, barley or millet flour was sold to the urban population. Thus we have some evidence to show that essential articles meant for day-to-day needs had become marketable.

As stated above, in many cases it is difficult to demarcate between artisans and traders. Goldsmiths, for instance, who had set up their own monastery, functioned as both traders and artisans. Although we may not be able to pinpoint such cases, there is no doubt that the later phase of the post-Maurya period saw a phenomenal progress in artisanal activities in northern and western India in whose trade Mathura participated as a great transit centre.

The general economic climate in northern India was favourable. The *Milinda-pañho* lists as many as seventy-five occupations,[3] about sixty of which were connected with various kinds of crafts; eight crafts were associated with the working of such mineral products as gold, silver, lead, tin, copper, brass, iron, and precious stones or jewels.[4] The *Mahāvastu* mentions a variety of brass (*ārakūṭa*), zinc, antimony and red arsenic.[5] All this shows considerable advance and specialisation in the working of various kinds of metal. Chemical examination of iron artifacts shows that by *c.* 100 BC steelmaking was known in India,[6] and the *Milinda* tells us something about the process employed in making iron objects. According to it even when beaten black iron carries weight and it does not vomit up the water it has once soaked in.[7] Apparently on account of large scale production of iron goods Indian iron and steel are mentioned in the *Periplus* as imports into the Abysinian ports. That Mathura had an important group of artisans and traders dealing in iron goods is clear from numerous epigraphic references, although we do not know the source of their supply of iron ores which may have come from considerable distance.

Textile manufacture was another important handicraft in the period under review. According to the *Milinda-pañho* five processes of cloth manufacture were undertaken by Gotamī, the aunt of the Buddha.[8]

[1] *Lüders' List*, no. 15. [2] *EI*, XXI, no. 10.
[3] p. 331. [4] *Milinda*, 331.
[5] Senart's edn, II. 106.
[6] D.P. Agarwal & A. Ghosh ed., *Radiocarbon and Indian Archaeology* (Bombay, 1973), 398-99.
[7] p. 415. [8] p. 240.

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But it should be understood that in spite of the use of wheels in numerous other objects such as pottery, carts/chariots, oil-making, the spinning wheel or *charkhā* was not known. Spindles and whorls seem to be the instruments meant for spinning. The presence of cotton dealers and representations of numerous types of cloth coupled with the reference to the Mathura *śāṭaka* in Patañjali shows that it was an important centre of cloth manufacture with a considerable population of weavers. Silk weaving may have also been practised at Mathura, for along with cloth making and the making of arms and luxury articles it is mentioned in the *Milinda*.[1] However, we do not still know when the art of growing silk-worms fed on mulberry leaves appeared in India. In any case it is a measure of the importance of the weaving class that Manu recommends levy of taxes on the produce of weavers.

Textile manufacture was supplemented by tailoring, which seems to have been known in the age of the Buddha. But the craft received special impetus because of the seven types of new dresses introduced by the Indo-Scythians. Tunics, trousers, cloak or mantle, coloured coat, overcoat, embroidered coat, skirts, petticoat, conical hat, long-sleeved tunics, long trousers, etc., are represented repeatedly in Mathura sculptures, and have been noted by Vogel, Agarwala and K.D. Bajpai. Apparently all this provided sufficient work for tailors (*pravarika*), who are mentioned several times as donors in Mathura inscriptions.[2] It is interesting to note that tailors were rich enough to set up their own monastery.[3] Besides tailoring, dyeing was another subsidiary occupation, and we hear of a donation made by the wife of a dyer (*rayaginī*).[4] Outside Mathura we have several references to dyers, and in an excavation in Tamil Nadu a dyer's vat has been discovered.

Pottery seems to have been a thriving craft at Mathura in the post-NBP phase. Apart from various types of red ware found in excavations, jars, vases, bowls, pitchers, large vessels, goblets, cups, etc., are found represented in sculptures, and have been noted by Vogel[5] and Agarwala.[6] A characteristic feature of some pots discovered from Mathura is their thin walls, particularly of sprinklers with bottle necks.

[1] p. 331. [2] *MI*, nos. 7, 74, 81, 124 & 133.
[3] ibid., no. 74.
[4] *Lüders' List*, no. 32.
[5] *AMM*, 109, 111, 162, 199, 201-4.
[6] *JUPHS*, XXII, 165, 180-86, 190-91, 193, 201, 204-5.

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Their walls are thinner even than those of NBP, and this thinness shows more skill and better technology. In any case sprinklers, which seem to have been a typical feature of pottery in the first two or three centuries of the Christian era, were present at Mathura. They may have been used either for religious purposes or for sprinkling perfumed water by affluent sections of society in the city.

In view of the profuse number of sculptures found in Mathura, especially those in red sandstone,[1] we may visualise the presence of a large number of sculptors. Several sculptors are mentioned in inscriptions.[2] Probably they were literate enough to incise their names. It appears that architectural activities such as housemaking, pillar making (especially sacred ones), fortification, etc., constituted an important form of artisanal occupation. The Kuṣāṇas introduced new types of shafts,[3] which may have employed quite a few masons. At any rate these activities provided livelihood for a good number of people. Terracottas are found in good numbers, and their makers flourished in an urban milieu, as has been shown by Devangana Desai.[4]

Because of the urban milieu a sizable class of entertainers including actors, dancers, etc., appears as donors for religious purposes.[5] We also notice musical instruments, which are represented in sculptures.[6] This would suggest that a few artisans were engaged in the manufacture of these instruments. Since numerous slabs, tablets, images, etc., were set up, it is evident that sculptors were in good demand and probably paid handsomely.

Although we know something about artisanal and trading activities at Mathura, we have no means to find out the prices of different products and the nature of their distribution. We have no idea about the nature of taxes that were collected nor of the way they were disbursed. We have some idea about the numerous donations that were made in Mathura; more than 370 inscriptions deal with this subject. Most gifts were made in favour of the Buddhist cause, the Jains cause came

[1]Vogel, *AMM*, 188; Agarwala, in *JUPHS*, XXII, 158, 188.
[2]*MI*, nos. 7, 146-49.
[3]Joshi, *Life in Uttarāpatha*, ch. II.
[4]*History and Society: Essays in Honour of Professor Niharranjan Ray*, ed., D.P. Chattopadhayaya, (Calcutta, 1978), 153-61.
[5]*MI*, no. 27; *Lüders' List*, nos. 85, 100.
[6]Vogel, *AMM*, 126; Agarwala, in *JUPHS*, XXII, 186-87; XXIII, 131.

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second, and the brāhmaṇical gods were a very poor third. Kṛṣṇa, the popular god of Mathura, does not find any place in donative inscriptions known to me. Every donation was a form of economic activity, but most donations were made for non-functional, unproductive purposes, and did not promote the cause of production. If we leave out donation of tanks, water reservoirs, monasteries, etc., and the donation of money to the guild of flour makers for feeding the brāhmaṇas, it will appear that most gifts were useless from the economic point of view. They certainly gave employment to a large number of masons, sculptors and various categories of wage earners but did not contribute to the wealth of Mathura, unless we presume that art objects carried the same value as they do today and were exported in good numbers. However they may have strengthened the donors ideologically and psychologically in pursuing their normal avocations.

Compared to donations, trade was certainly a far more important mechanism in the distribution of various types of goods, and it seems that most goods were priced in terms of metallic money. We have no idea about the nature of profit reaped by the middlemen. An impressionistic view of the information available about the coins suggests that the period 2nd cen. BC-2nd cen. AD was an age of most plentiful coinage in ancient India. It would be wrong to think that from the monetary point of view the post-Maurya period was marked by decline and the Gupta period by prosperity. The period is noted for the finds of both Roman and indigenous coins. 129 finds of Roman coins have been reported so far,[1] but most of these have been found south of the Vindhyas. It is likely that some imitation Roman coins were being issued by Indian agencies, but the overwhelming part of transactions seems to have been carried on in indigenous coins. Possibly numerous agencies such as cities, guilds, "tribes" and ruling dynasties issued their coins in this period mostly in copper/bronze, lead, and potin. although gold coins appeared for the first time in good numbers under the Kuṣāṇas. So far the number of dies/moulds even for the published coins has not been worked out, but we possibly notice their largest number during this period. Apart from the circulation of uninscribed punch-marked coins this is a period of inscribed coins. Thus the city of Taxila issued three series of coins, (i) the *negama* series, (ii) the

[1]Manfred G. Raschke, *Roman Coin Finds on the Indian Subcontinent: A Catalogue and Analysis* (Cyclostyled Paper; place and date not mentioned).

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pamcanekame series and (iii) the *hirañasame* series. The first contained five varieties of legends and the last contained two such varieties.[1] Although Taxila came under the Greeks, Scythians, Parthians and Kuṣāṇas in post-Maurya times, its coinage continued till its conquest by the Kuṣāṇas.[2] Taxilan coins have been found at Sonkh, which shows its commercial contacts with Taxila. Varanasi, Kauśāmbī, Vidisa, Erakiṇa, Bhāgila, Kaurara, Ujjayinī, Tripurī, Māhiṣmatī, and probably Tagar and Ayodhya, issued coins.[3] Indrapura or Indor also issued its coins.[4] Puṣkalāvatī and Kapiśā also seem to have issued their coins.[5] In some other cases such as Kādaṣa, Vatasvaka, Upagoasa Upātikya it is not clear whether these were cities or "tribes."[6] Certain features of the city coinage system may be noted. Most cities lay on trade routes.[7] At many places their coins are datable to about the third and second centuries BC and become rare in later layers.[8] All of these coins were made of copper or of some alloy of it.[9] In fact properly speaking they should be called bronze coins. In any case the point has to be stressed that these coins were meant for day-to-day transactions carried on by the ordinary folk. It is to be further noted that most city coins were die-struck,[10] but in order to obtain even a rough idea of the volume of the coins we have to find out the number of dies used for this purpose. We may add that we have three types (I, II & III) of coins from Kauśāmbī; in addition we have three varieties with the legend *negama* or *gadhikan*.[11] Three types of coins have been found from Eran.[12] Two varieties called A & B are known from Bhāgila near Sanchi.[13] Two types of Māhiṣmati coins have been recovered.[14]

In addition to city coins we have a large number of "tribal" coins which belong to a later period. It seems that those who issued these coins were not in the tribal stage of development, but divided into classes, as can be inferred from social differentiation in the states of the

[1]Bela Lahiri, in *JNSI*, XXXVII, pt. II, 52-3. Hiraṇyāśrama may have been a market quarter in the city of Taxila. ibid., 54.

[2]Bela Lahiri, in *JNSI*, XXXIII, pt. II, 54.

[3]cf. H. Härtel, "Some Results of the Excavation at Sonkh", *German Scholars on India*, II, (New Delhi, 1976), 87.

[4]Information from Professor A.M. Shastri.

[5]Bela Lahiri, op. cit., 37-8.

[6]ibid., 35-8. [7]ibid , 39. [8]ibid., 36. [9]ibid., 39.
[10]ibid. [11]ibid., 42-3. [12]ibid., 44-5. [13]ibid., 45.
[14]ibid., 50.

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Mālavas and Kṣudrakas. However the nomenclature "tribal" persists, and has been used by Allan and other scholars. These coins were issued by segmentary oligarchies. K.K. Dasgupta has made a detailed study of coins issued by 14 tribes, most of whom were located in the Punjab and Rajasthan, and apparently their coins circulated in Mathura. Thus the Kuṇindas occupied a narrow strip of land between the Yamuna and the Sutlej.[1] The Yaudheya coins have been found plentifully in the country to the westward of the Yamuna in Haryana and Punjab.[2] They belong to the period from the late second century BC to the early fourth century AD.[3] Numerous coin moulds of the Yaudheyas have been obtained from Rohtak and Sunet.[4] On the basis of K.K. Dasgupta we can count nearly 175 types of "tribal", coins,[5] which would mean as many dies/moulds. But this list is not exhaustive. In addition to this coins were issued by numerous local dynasties, the most famous of these being the "Mitra" rulers. In the Pañcāla area we have a large number of such coins, especially from Ahicchatrā. The Pañcāla coins have been carefully studied by K.M. Shrimali, in his *History of Pañcāla*,[6] which is published just now. On the basis of symbols, palaeography, etc., Agnimitra alone seems to have used nearly 100 dies/moulds.[7] Apparently the Pañcāla coins may have circulated in the Mathura region.

An idea of the abundance of coins in this period can be had from the fact that the Śaka and Pahlava coins which circulated in north-western India had more than 200 monograms[8] which would presuppose a similar number of dies/moulds. Similarly, as can be said on the basis of the study of A.M. Shastri, the Maghas of Kauśāmbī issued 121 varieties of coins, which would mean as many dies. If we carefully examine the coins issued by the foreign and indigenous dynasties in post-Maurya times we will notice a bewildering variety of dies/moulds used by them. In examining the number of moulds/dies we have to take into account the nature of symbols, palaeography, size, metal, etc.

[1]Allan, *CCBM*, p. CIII. [2]ibid., p. CLII.
[3]ibid., CLII-CLIII.
[4]K.K. Dasgupta, *A Tribal History of Ancient India, A Numismatic Approach*, (Calcutta, 1974), 255.
[5]ibid., Appendix IV.
[6]New Delhi, 1983.
[7]I gather this from a chart prepared by Dr. Shrimali and also from discussion with him.
[8]K. Walton Dobbins, *Saka-Pahlava Coinage* (Varanasi, 1973), 149-93.

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It is strange that although Mathura was an important commercial centre, so far no coins issued by it as a city have been noticed. Obviously its needs were served by the coins issued by the dynasties which ruled here and also by numerous other city and "tribal" and dynastic coins from outside. The Mitra and Datta coins "cover the period from the end of the third to the middle of the first century BC", when these were succeeded by a dynasty of the Śakas bearing the title *kṣatrapa* and *mahākṣatrapa*.[1] It seems that the Kuṣāṇas issued the largest number of copper coins, and we learn from a numismatist[2] that Kuṣāṇa coppers are found in almost every important museum in India. So far as the Mathura Museum is concerned, it contains copper coins of Soter Magus,[3] Wema Kadphises,[4] Huviṣka[5] and Indo-Scythians or of the Kuṣāṇa type;[6] a copper coin of late Indo-Sassanian type is also available.[7] Coppers were meant for the use of the ordinary people, but for big transactions gold coins were issued by the Kuṣāṇas on a large scale. Vogel's catalogue of the antiquities of the Mathura Museum lists the gold coins of the Scytho-Sassanian or the Kuṣāṇo-Sassanian type, of the later Kuṣāṇa type and of the later Indo-Kuṣāṇa or Little Kuṣāṇa type.[8] Some coins have also been recovered from Sonkh and other excavations, but the general impression is one of the predominance of coppers in the Mathura region, which would imply that marketisation had affected even the common people. The overall picture of coinage in India in the period 2nd cen. BC-2nd cen. AD is consistent with the high peak of urbanism, handicrafts and commerce in this period.

No background study of trends in the economic history of Mathura can be complete without some idea of the technological factors operating in this period. There is little doubt that urbanism reached its climax in northern and western India in this period. Several factors contributed to it. One such factor was the change in building methods. At Mathura,[9] and Ganwaria[10] in Basti district in north-eastern Uttar

[1]Allan, *CCBM*, p. CXI.
[2]Information from Dr. Pratipal Bhatia.
[3]Vogel, *AMM*, 205.
[4]ibid. [5]ibid. [6]ibid.
[7]ibid. [8]ibid.
[9]Archaeological Survey of India (cyclostyled) *Report of the Director General for the Years 1974-78*, 25th Meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Archaeology, New Delhi, 9 December 1979, p. 20.
[10]ibid., 28.

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Pradesh the flooring was made of brick concrete mixed with lime. This indicates the use of *surkhi* which contributed to the stability of structures. Further, baked tiles for roofing appear in the period at several places in both the Sātavāhana[1] and Kuṣāṇa zones including Mathura.[2] These innovations added to the solidity and longevity of urban structures in the early centuries of the Christian era.

In addition to improvement in housing facilities we notice some new features in the use of horse, which may have indirectly helped commerce. Stirrups were illustrated both at Sanchi and Mathura.[3] Although these seem to have been loose ropes in the form of toe stirrups and less in use, they may have provided better control of the horse to the caravan leader. Saddles[4] and bridles[5] were also in use in this period, but the latter were more common. Although the equestrian technology primarily helped fighters, it may have also been of use to the trade caravans which certainly needed protection on long journeys. Moreover although camels were not so common as means of transport,[6] the Central Asians introduced camels of double humped Bactrian variety, which were controlled by reins and switches made of twisted stuff.[7] It is interesting that even bulls were used for riding and controlled by thongs and long staffs.[8] Another improvement in transport seems to have been the use of bridge. Literature of about the 2nd cen. BC to the 2nd cen. AD shows that moats around fortification were provided with bridges (*saṃkrama*).[9] It is likely that some kind of bridges, apart from boat bridges, may have been put up for crossing rivers intersecting the roads.

Apart from some of these improvements in transport technologywe may also take note of the beginning of the techniques of making steel which were evidently well developed around 100 BC. The technique of glass blowing may have been introduced about the beginning of the Christian era. While we have considerable evidence of the sale and manufacture of iron goods at Mathura, no such evidence is available about glass manufacture. But, as M.G. Dikshit has shown, the period

[1]ibid., 38; *Indian Archaeology 1974-75—A Review*, 32.

[2]*Indian Archaeology 1974-75—A Review*, 49-50. There seems to be some confusion in ascribing the use of roof tiles to Period I (*circa* fourth-third century BC) at Mathura on p. 49

[3]N. P. Joshi, *Life in Uttarāpatha*, 107-9.

[4]ibid., 107. [5]ibid., 105. [6]ibid., 109-11.

[7]ibid. [8]ibid., 111. [9]ibid., 248.

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200 BC-AD 200 saw the high watermark of glass manufacture in India, and it is likely that Mathura had some share in it. We have already referred to the possible introduction of growing mulberry silk in this period.

But the most revolutionary change that affected foreign trade and economic life of the cities was the discovery of the monsoons. Its date is placed around AD 48, but the finds of Roman coins of an earlier date in south India suggest that this discovery may have occurred around the beginning of the Christian era. The discovery not only immensely helped sea trade but also encouraged export and import from the hinterland and interior regions.

According to a Hindi saying Mathura occupies a unique place in the three traditional worlds (*tīn lok se Mathurā nyārī*). This saying may have been derived from the heretical character of the city in the period under consideration. It was only in later times that this place became a centre of the Kṛṣṇa cult. But from the economic point of view Mathura's special feature lay in not possessing a strong rural base. Whatever importance it enjoyed in crafts, commerce and urbanism was derived mainly from certain economic and technological developments which characterised almost the whole of northern, western and a good part of coastal India. Mathura's share in all this development was substantial because of the strategic position it enjoyed. It is significant that the general decline in trade and urbanism based on artisanal and commercial activities from the third-fourth centuries AD onwards also affected Mathura as it did many other towns in northern and western India. It is because of this that while we have seven layers of Kuṣāṇa structures at Sonkh, we have only one or two layers of Gupta structures. The later importance of Mathura was derived more from its being a place of pilgrimage than from its being a centre of crafts, commerce and administration.

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CHAPTER XIII

Coins and Problems of Early Economic History

SOME enthusiasts argue for the existence of coins in Vedic times on the basis of literary references. But *ṇiṣka*, *śatamāna*, etc., may have been objects of gold meant for use by men of rank and position who were concerned with acquiring prestige and respectability. *Niṣka*, a golden necklace, figures in the context of gifts, but it is very doubtful whether it was used in sale and purchase in Vedic times. In spite of diligent digging during the last thirty-five years no pre-NBP coins have been found so far. The earliest Indian coins are not earlier than the 5th century BC, and although the archaeological context of many old hoards is not known it is evident that the punch-marked coins and NBP belong to the same archaeological horizon. Archaeologically coins appear first in Greek cities in western Asia around the middle of the 7th century BC. If diffusion is considered an important factor in the spread of material culture, it would be reasonable to look for the first presence of coins in north-western India. But actually the punch-marked coins have not been found in any considerable number in that area. They are first noticed in good numbers in south Bihar and eastern U.P., where most coins of about the 5th or 4th century BC were made of silver. This again raises an important problem. The present geology of this area/does not know of any silver ores, and the quantity of silver obtainable from the other parts of India is also very limited. Only a few ounces of silver can be extracted from one ton of argentiferrous lead found in Bihar, but this negligible quantity cannot account for the issue of punch-marked silver coinage in plenty unless we can locate some source of silver in Bihar in ancient times. Some eighteenth century accounts speak of the existence of silver mines in the Kharagpur hills in the Monghyr district, but their traces have to be still found.

Under the Mauryas the Magadhan empire used the largest number of the punch-marked coins and played an important part in

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spreading their use beyond the middle Gangetic areas. The punch-marked coins found in excavations in Orissa, Andhra, the Deccan and western India belong to a date later than 300 BC. A good many pre-Sātavāhana coins have been found in the Deccan, but these are uninscribed and without portraits. The Mauryas can therefore be reasonably credited with the extension of their use throughout the length and breadth of their empire. They prepared the ground for the rise of monetary economy in the Deccan, where crafts and commerce flourished under the Sātavāhanas.

The study of coinage for the economic history of post-Maurya times raises several questions. There was abundance of punch-marked silver coins in the pre-Christian era, but it is curious that although some silver coins were issued by the Greeks they were not issued by the Kuṣāṇas,[1] who ruled for about two centuries over a wide territory extending from the Oxus to the Gaṅgā. How to account for the sudden disappearance of silver money? Evidently some important source of silver suddenly dried up in Kuṣāṇa times. Possibly the silver mines of the Kharagpur hills were out of the reach of the Kuṣāṇas. Although the Greeks issued a few gold coins for the first time, they were minted in large numbers by the Kuṣāṇa rulers.

What could be the possible sources of the Kuṣāṇa gold? The view that the Kuṣāṇas obtained their gold from Central Asia has some archaeological proof. The Hermitage Museum in Leningrad, which houses many antiquities from Central Asia, does not have any gold object of Kuṣāṇa times. But Central Asia has been famous for gold, and bricks of gold discovered from that region can be ascribed to the early centuries of the Christian era. The treasure rooms of the Hermitage Museum in Leningrad are very rich in objects of gold including stirrups and ornaments, but they are mostly from south Russia. The possibility of the Kuṣāṇas obtaining gold from Central Asia is plausible, but we have also to think of sources in India, Rome and the Caucasus area.

It is evident that at least some Kuṣāṇa coins were minted out of the Indian gold. As early as the 5th century BC the Indian satrapy paid an annual tribute of 320 talents of gold to Persia. This may have been obtained from the gold mines, reported to have existed in Sindh in the

[1]This point was suggested to me by David MacDowall.

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time of Alexander.[1] The Kolar gold fields lay outside the Kuṣāṇa empire, but the Kuṣāṇas may have exploited the gold mines of Dhalbhum, which apparently lay within the sphere of their influence.

It has been suggested that the Kuṣāṇas converted Roman gold coins into their own gold coins. The hypothesis is plausible. Whereas 129 finds of Roman gold coins have been reported in the Indian subcontinent, most of them have been found to the south of the Vindhyas. Apparently Roman gold coins available in north India were turned into fresh gold coins by the Kuṣāṇas, although it would be wrong to think that all Kuṣāṇa money was minted out of the Roman gold.

But from where did the Romans obtain all this gold? It came from Africa and the Caucasus area, and the supply from Africa did not stop until its invasion by the Arab Muslims in the 8th century AD. There are good grounds to show that the Kuṣāṇas maintained close contacts with the Roman empire from where they obtained gold as a result of trade through the Silk Route which passed through their empire.

We have to explain the abundance of the gold coins under the Guptas, who issued far more gold money than their predecessors. Although the Gupta empire carried on trade with the eastern Roman empire, the volume of trade was considerably less than that which India had with the eastern Roman empire during the first century AD. It is likely that the Guptas obtained their gold from the eastern part of the Roman empire through trade and also from China and South-East Asia. Perhaps they also procured some gold from the south Indian gold fields the high period of whose working corresponds with the last centuries BC and the first two centuries of the Christian era.[2]

There are significant differences between the Kuṣāṇa coinage and the Gupta coinage. The Kuṣāṇas issued a good number of copper coins, which evidently presupposes the penetration of money economy into towns and possibly into the rural areas, but the Guptas did not issue many coppers. If copper was available in very good quantities in India why then did not the Guptas keep up the copper tradition set up by the Kuṣāṇas? The present writer has tried to explain this elsewhere on the basis of the growth of more or less self-sufficient eco-

[1] Strabo, XV. 1.34 in Hamilton and Falconer, III. 96.

[2] F.R. Allchin, 'Upon the Antiquity and Methods of Gold Mining in Ancient India', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, V, pt. II, 1962, p. 211.

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nomic units which precluded the use of coins by the rural peasantry and rendered the use of money less important.[1] It is also striking that the gold content of the Gupta coins was less than that at of the Kuṣāṇa coins and went on diminishing at a fast rate, especially towards the end of the Gupta rule.

In the post-Gupta period a student of economic history is surprised at the almost complete absence of gold coins for four centuries and the paucity of coins in general in north India. References to gold coins in grants made to the temples of south India are numerous, but even in that region the physically available coins are not many. As regards north India and the Deccan, although three important dynasties ruled them for about three centuries and even more, so far it has not been possible to ascribe with confidence any coins to the Pālas and Rāṣṭrakūṭas; those assignable to some Pratīhāra kings are very few and their attribution is not free from doubt. It is true that numerous hoards of *gadhaiya* coins with the representation of fire altar have been discovered in Rājasthān and the neighbouring areas, but those bearing inscriptions in Nāgarī letters cannot be placed earlier than the 10th-11th centuries. Obviously the *gadhaiya* coins do not fill up the gap between the sixth and the tenth century, and they were confined mainly to the north-western part of the country. In the period marked by the paucity of coins in the north and the south, we find two pockets in which coins continued to be issued without interruption. A continuous tradition of coinage for four hundred years from the sixth to the tenth century is found in Kashmir. A similar continuity can be noticed in the dominions of the Shahis in the Punjab and Afghanistan. Coins issued by the princes of these areas were obviously meant for trade and remuneration for various types of services. Significantly enough epigraphic records of land grants,[2] through which services were paid in the greater part of the country, have not been found in these areas. But the role of trade and the possibilities of economic contacts with the Islamic lands in which coinage was going strong have to be explored.

It is clear that in post-Gupta times the supply of gold was very limited. It was held on the basis of radiocarbon analyses and exami-

[1]R.S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism : c. 300-1200*, (Calcutta, 1965), 63-65.

[2]Attention to the absence of land grants in these areas was drawn by Romila Thapar in her presidential address at the Punjab History Congress in 1976.

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nation of some objects from the old workings that gold mining continued vigorously in the Raichur district from the 1st century BC to the 3rd century AD, and then it began to dwindle and finally disappeared.[1] But for old workings in Kolar gold mines we have two radiocarbon dates, AD 450+115[2] and AD 660+90,[3] which suggest that gold mining continued in the 5th and 6th centuries. However gold may also have been used for jewellery and temple purposes. While the local supply dwindled, that from Africa was interrupted by the Arab invasion. Gold money became rare not only in north India. We know of at least two other countries which did not have gold coins in the corresponding period. Thus gold money was not used in the western Roman empire, especially in south Italy between the 8th and the 11th centuries AD. Similarly no gold money was used in France between *circa* AD 750 and 1300, except for a small interval in the reign of Charles the Great. In this period silver was used, and it was perhaps found more useful because of the limited supply of gold from Africa and also because of the impact of foreign invasions which strengthened the trend towards natural economy. But in spite of the short supply of gold in this period from Africa there was no shortage of gold coins in the eastern Roman empire which ruled in western Asia.[4] Perhaps they had built up sufficient reserves of gold or else they acquired gold from the Caucasus. Although the eastern Roman empire was situated nearer to India, gold coins did not appear in India in this period. An important reason seems to have been the transmission of the knowledge of silk going directly from China to the Byzantium in the middle of the 6th century AD, which stopped the supply of Indian silk to that empire.[5] But for other reasons we will have to investigate the nature of commercial relations of northern India with the eastern Roman empire during this period. Perhaps some new material may come from the other end.

In the early centuries of the Christian era, especially in the Gupta period, China and South-East Asia seem to have supplied gold to India in return for some precious stones as beryl, cotton fabrics and sugar. The very names Suvarṇabhūmi and Suvarṇadvīpa given to the countries of South-East Asia suggest that the Indians went there in

[1]F.R. Allchin, op. cit., 200-207, 211.
[2]*IAR*, 1969-70, 67. [3]Ibid., 1971-72, 85.
[4]Information supplied by V.M. Potin of the Hermitage Museum, Leningrad.
[5]R.S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism*, 67.

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search of the yellow metal. But gradually this profitable exchange languished. During the Wei Dynasty (AD 220-265) some Indians taught the Chinese to make from the stone coloured glass which could be occasionally passed off in China as beryl because of its being confused with that precious stone.[1] This may have undermined India's supply of beryl to China. Further, cotton, was introduced into the Indianised states of Central Asia and South-East Asia by India, and travelled to China. Soon after the 6th century AD the Chinese learnt the technique of cotton cultivation and textile industry.[2] Finally, in the reign of the Tang Emperor T'ai-tsung (AD 627-749) an imperial mission sent to Magadh brought the knowledge of making sugar.[3] Once the peoples of China and South-East Asia learnt how to produce the things they needed from India they ceased to send their gold to India in return for these articles.

During the two centuries preceding the establishment of the Turkish rule in northern India coinage revived in the kingdoms of the Candellas, Kalacuris, Gāhaḍavālas, Tomaras, etc. Surprisingly enough few coins are found in the dominions of the Caulukyas of Gujarat although they ruled over a coastal area with considerable trade and commerce, as known from inscriptions and literature. The revival of gold and other coins in the 11th and 12th centuries, however tardy, has to be accounted for. We may add that these gold coins when compared with Gupta gold coins appear to be little pieces. It means that even at this stage the supply of gold was limited. In Italy and France the use of gold coins was resumed in about the 12th or 13th century when gold began to be again supplied by Africa. But in northern India this resumption appears a century earlier, and we wonder whether this can be connected with developments outside India. In such cases the history of coinage in the country can be understood only in the context of its external commercial relations. But so far no investigation has been made on these lines.

The place of coins in the economic life of the people in terms of time and place has still to be determined. The study of coins for this purpose has not advanced beyond testing their specific gravity. But all this can be made far more useful if we are given some idea of

[1]Tan Chang, 'Ancient China's Quest for Indian Products', *The Sunday Statesman*, Magazine Section, 6 April, 1969.
[2]ibid.
[3]ibid.

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the volume of the coins in circulation. The problem of the quantity of coins in India has not received any serious attention. A formula has been used to assess the quantity of the English coinage of the eighth to eleventh centuries[1] and also of the mediaeval Islamic coinage in the Near East.[2] In spite of certain limitations it is worthwhile to apply this method to the study of the Indian coins. According to this formula the first essential is to establish the maximum available varieties of coins issued by a particular ruler at a particular time, which enables us to count the dies or the moulds used for the purpose. Then we have to find out the capacity of a die for turning out the number of gold, silver and copper coins. Unfortunately only bronze dies have been discovered so far, but if dies were made of steel, attributed to India as early as the fourth century BC, it is obvious that they were capable of punching or striking numerous coins. Obviously gold being the hardest, lesser number of coins would be struck with the steel die, but since silver is not so hard and copper is still less hard the same steel die can be used in striking many more coins in these two cases. Once the formula has been tested scientifically it can be used in determining the number of the punch-marked and die-struck coins. P.L. Gupta has noted as many as 550 varieties of punch-marked coins[3] assignable to the period from the 5th to the 2nd century BC, but he has physically handled only 30,000 coins,[4] which is a small fragment of the whole coinage. If we suppose that one metal punch-mark could be used in punching 5,000 coins the total number of punch-marked coins during this period would be about 27,50,000. This may be a very rough figure, but it does lend some reality to the early Sanskrit and Pāli references to the use of *paṇas* for the sale and purchase of commodities including human beings, for charging interest on loans, and for cash payment of all categories of officers. In any case we need a thorough study of punches, dies, moulds, proof pieces and even of forgeries in order to form a rough idea of the volume of coins in circulation. It is signi-

[1]D.M. Metcalf, 'How Large was the Anglo-Saxon Currency?', *The Economic History Review*, Second Series, XVIII, no. 3, 1965, 475-82.

[2]'Early Islamic Mint Output', prepared by a seminar at the University of Michigan, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, IX, pt. III, 1966, 212-41.

[3]*Seminar Papers on the Chronology of the Punch-Marked Coins*, ed. A.K. Narain & L. Gopal, (Varanasi, 1966), 7.

[4]ibid., 1.

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ficant that most moulds, made of terracotta, discovered so far belong to the period around the first two Christian centuries.

The frequency with which coins are used is an important aspect of their economic study. D. D. Kosambi has examined the punch-marked coins in this light. But his method needs to be further refined and pursued in relation to the other types of coins in different periods and in different areas. When a coin passes through so many hands in course of time it undergoes wear and tear and it loses some weight. Therefore something can be done to find out the frequency of the use of coins to get an idea of the period of their circulation.

The area of the circulation of coins has an important economic bearing, which has to be examined in the context of the distribution of the mints. Unfortunately the exact find-spots of many ancient coinhoards deposited in Indian and foreign museums are not specified, with the result that their area of distribution cannot be demarcated. Coins are useful for determining the extent of an empire, but they are far more useful for determining the nature of economy. We can look for them not only in the capitals of kings, but also on trade routes, in towns, in the shopping areas of excavated towns, in ports and in the coastal districts. The theory that gold coins involving large transactions travel over a long distance and that coppers meant for the use of the common people are minted and circulated locally has to be examined with care. There is a view that silver was used in foreign trade in Italy in the tenth century, and although taxes were paid in silver coins in Russia during the 14th and 15th centuries copper coins were used in foreign trade.[1]

All the observations made in this article are not grounded in texts and facts, but some of them could engage the attention of the numismatists. Coins will not carry much meaning for economic history unless we identify the ancient sources of gold, silver and other metals, explain the abundance and paucity of coins, determine the area and period of circulation, and above all calculate the volume of

[1]Information supplied by V.M. Potin. Recently a study of the distribution of Roman coins in South India by P.L. Gupta shows that the earliest Roman coins are found in the district of Coimbatore and not in the Sātavāhana dominions with which the Romans had a flourishing trade, cf. *Roman Coins from Andhra Pradesh*, (Hyderabad, 1965), 48. Such a study has to be undertaken in relation to various types of Indian coins. A numismatic atlas of ancient India is being prepared by Pratipal Bhatia.

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coins in the context of time and place. At the moment all our ideas about the quantities of coins are impressionistic and subjective. It is time that by developing and applying objective tests and methods and by asking questions about the types of use to which the coins were put we find out the volume of coins and thee part they played in the economic life of the people.

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CHAPTER XIV

Usury in Early Mediaeval Times

I. Attitudes Towards Usury

Literally the term usury means the practice of lending money at an exorbitant rate of interest, especially at a higher rate than is allowed by law. This, however, seems to be a later meaning. In many ancient societies the very idea of taking interest was considered to be reprehensible, and the act of charging interest, high or low, was thought to be immoral, so that the term usury has a tinge of something socially and religiously undesirable about it. In early mediaeval Indian society it is not always possible to draw a precise line between usury and interest, and hence the subject can be best studied by examining the data on interest and money-lending.

The present study covers a period of about 800 years, and is mainly based on Smṛti texts. In about the fifth and sixth centuries Bṛhaspati and Kātyāyana present to us fairly developed laws regarding debt. Fragments of law ascribed to their successors add precious little. The subject is also dealt with in the compilations on debt in the digests of the twelfth and fifteenth centuries.

The Dharmaśāstra material can be supplemented by some epigraphic evidence, but even all this stuff does not enable us to treat the whole question in successive stages. Hence we propose to study its important aspects separately but in sequence of time wherever possible.

Ancient and mediaeval Indian Sanskrit texts convey the idea of interest or usury by *kusīda*, *vārdhuṣa*, *vṛddhi*, and *vyāja*, of which the last seems to be of later origin. Since these terms were used indiscriminately by lawgivers, it is difficult to establish whether they used one for usury and the other for interest. Baudhāyana, a lawgiver of about the fifth century BC, prescribes taking interest as a source of livelihood for the vaiśya[1] and condemns a brāhmaṇa who practises

[1] *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra* (Kasi Sanskrit Series, no. 104, Banaras, 1934), 1. 10.22.

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vārdhuṣa as a śūdra.[1] On the other hand Gautama permits *kusīda* to a brāhmaṇa who does not do it himself.[2] Manu does not demarcate between *vṛddhi* and *kusīda*, and lays down that the *vārdhuṣika* (one who lends at interest) should take *vṛddhi*.[3] In the opinion of Vasiṣṭha a *vārdhuṣika* is one who taking cheap lends it on condition of receiving a greater quantity.[4] Whether this applied to grain is not clear from the text. But Nārada defines *vārdhuṣa* (usury) as interest on grain.[5] According to him, interest on grain can rise three times the principle,[6] but it can be regarded as usury only when it is demanded at the rate of 5 per cent on grain given through friendship.[7]

Bṛhaspati's concept of usury was different. According to him, the use of a pledge after twice the principal has been realized from it, compound interest, and the addition of the interest to the principal constitute usury and are to be condemned.[8] Bṛhaspati seems to identify *kusīda* with usury and defines it as that which is taken fourfold or even eightfold without any qualm of conscience from a poor person who is serving or distressed.[9] He gives a fanciful grammatical interpretation of the terms *ku* and *sīda*,[10] which indicates the attitude of derision in which the lawgiver holds usurious rates of interest. The idea is reproduced in the ninth century by Medhātithi, according to whom the term *kusīda* means that which is followed by evil persons, and then the persons themselves.[11] Almost all the legal texts disapprove of what is not considered *dharmyā vṛddhi*, legal interest, but they do not seem to use any special term of opprobrium for it. Nevertheless, they exhibit a tone of venom against exorbitant interest, which continues into late mediaeval times. The *Vivādacandra*, written by Misaru Mishra of Mithilā in the first half of the fifteenth century, condemns the food of the usurer (*vārdhuṣikasyānna*) who waits for long for the increase of his interest as nightsoil.[12]

The legal texts from ancient to mediaeval times show a changing attitude towards charging interest by members of various social classes (varṇas). Lawgivers of the fifth-third centuries BC permit lending

[1]I. 10.25. [2]X. 5-6. [3]VIII. 140. [4]II. 41-42.
[5]IV. 110 *vṛddhiṣtu yoktā dhānyasya vārdhuṣaṃ tadudāhṛtam* quoted in *HDS*, III, 417.
[6]I. 107. [7]I. 109-10. [8]XI. 12. [9]XI. 2.
[10]*SBE*, XXXIII, 320. [11]On Manu, VIII. 152.
[12]Quoted in *HDS*, III, 423, fn. 691.

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at interest only to the vaiśyas. Vasiṣṭha lays down that a brāhmaṇa or śrotriya shall not act as usurer.[1] In particular a brāhmaṇa usurer (*vārdhuṣika*) is condemned as a śūdra[2] and is not to be treated even as a vaiśya. Vasiṣṭha states that if brāhmaṇa murder and usury are weighed in a balance, the murderer of a brāhmaṇa rises to the top while the usurer trembles.[3] Similarly Baudhāyana declares that if interest (*vṛddhi*) and abortion are weighed, the destroyer of womb rises while the usurer sinks.[4] Usury is therefore considered even worse than the murder of a brāhmaṇa or abortion. Coming as all this does from brāhmaṇa lawgivers, it shows an intense hatred for usurers, who probably did not spare the brāhmaṇas. However, Baudhāyana[5] permits the first two varṇas to charge interest from one who neglects his sacred duties, from a miser, from an atheist, or from a very wicked man, but these cases are exceptional and do not ordinarily allow a brāhmaṇa to practise usury. Gautama[6] permits a brāhmaṇa to lend at interest provided he does not do it himself. But it is doubtful whether this injunction formed part of his original law-book.[7]

Manu, the most important lawgiver of post-Maurya times, states in unequivocal terms that the brāhmaṇa or the kṣatriya should not take interest even in times of distress, but should pay some interest to people of mean avocations (*pāpīyase*) out of legal necessity (*dharmārtham*).[8] On the other hand Manu enjoins the king to compel the vaiśya to practise lending at interest and other occupations.[9] Nārada seems to concede this practice in favour of the kṣatriya but lays down that a brāhmaṇa must never resort to usury, not even in a state of extreme distress.[10] Similarly Kātyāyana states that a brāhmaṇa (*dvija*) who

[1]*Vas.*, II. 40. [2]*Baudh.*, 1. 10. 25.
[3]*Vas.*, I1.46. [4]1. 10. 24. [5]1. 10. 26. [6]X. 5-6.

[7]Gautama is considered to be one of the earliest lawgivers, if not the earliest. It has been shown by me elsewhere (*Śūdras in Ancient India*, Delhi, 1958, pp. 83-84) that he should be dated much later on the basis of his provisions on social matters. His regulations regarding debt confirm my earlier view, and it seems that these were interpolated into Gautama's law-book some time in Gupta or post-Gupta times. His enumeration of six kinds of interest are not found in any law-book earlier than that of Bṛhaspati, whose section on debt is the most developed. Again, his provision that a brāhmaṇa can lend (money?) at interest is not found in this form in any early law-book; on the other hand it is found in post-Gupta texts which allow this to a brāmaṇa only in distress.

[8]X. 117. [9]VIII. 410. [10]I. 111.

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is a cowherd, trader, artisan, bard, servant, and an interest-taker should be administered the same ordeal by the king as a śūdra.[1] Thus the law-books of the post-Maurya and Gupta period roundly prohibit a brāhmaṇa to live on interest. It is curious that they do not allow even as much latitude to the brāhmaṇas in this respect as Baudhāyana does.

About three centuries later the situation seems to have changed. In the ninth century, commenting on Manu VIII. 140, Medhātithi states that the god Vasiṣṭha, who possessed knowledge of all the three ages and was free from various weaknesses including greed, accepted interest at the rate of I/80th of the principal. He therefore declares that this rate increases wealth, and is not associated with the weakness of greed (*lobha*). From this it follows that if Vasiṣṭha charged interest, the brāhmaṇas were justified in doing so. The position came to be clearly recognized by the twelfth century, when the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* was compiled. This text permits the brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas to practise *kusīda* in times of distress.[2] It considers *kusīda* to be the most effective of all the modes of livelihood prescribed by sages in abnormal times.[3] Agriculture is hampered by want of rains, royal terror, and the depredations of the mice, etc., but not *kusīda* which keeps on growing at all times and under all circumstances.[4]

Whether brāhmaṇas actually practised money-lending in northern India is difficult to say. Speaking of the eleventh century Alberuni states: 'Usury or taking percentages is forbidden. Only to the śūdra is it allowed to take percentages, as long as his profit is not more than (a) fiftieth of the capital'.[5] It is not clear whether "usury" is the correct word used by Sachau in his translation. But since all the legal texts authorize the vaiśyas to charge interest, there is no reason to believe that this was confined to the śūdras in Alberuni's time. Probably Alberuni's picture is rather idealistic, and projects Islamic ideas which do not permit such percentages.

But in south India temple managements dominated by priests and brāhmaṇas did invest gold with the village assemblies and others, and

[1] *Kātyāyana Smṛti* (ed. and tr. P.V. Kane, Oriental Book Agency, Poona), Verse 423. Here the term *dvija* is taken by Kane as a member of three higher castes, but the word brāhmaṇa would suit the context better.

[2] Quoted in *Vācaspatyam* (Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series), III, 2159.

[3] ibid. [4] ibid.

[5] *Alberuni's India*, ed. and trans. Edward C. Sachau (London, 1910), II, 150.

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received interest thereon for the maintenance of worship, perpetual burning of lamps, and similar other purposes. All this was done on religious grounds, and we have yet to find examples of money-lending carried on by the brāhmaṇas for secular purposes.

II. Rates of Interest

From the fifth century BC onwards metal coins came into use, and loans were given in both cash and kind. Some early lawgivers, such as Baudhāyana[1] and Gautama,[2] clearly mention the percentage in terms of coins, which shows that money-lending was practised. Some later lawgivers do not clarify it, but the rates they laid down apparently refer to loans in cash, for in regard to loans in kind they do not indicate the rate but merely prescribe the maximum to which the interest can rise.

The rates of interest laid down by the legal texts show a tendency towards gradual increase. Baudhāyana prescribes 10 per cent per year,[3] but Gautama, whose law-book was compiled later, raises it to 15 per cent,[4] which is supported by Vasiṣṭha.[5] This rate is endorsed by not only the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya[6] but also by the law-books of the first six centuries of the Christian era.[7] Mediaeval lawgivers and commentators held that it applied only to loans for which securities were furnished. Vyāsa, whose code was compiled some time between AD 600 and 900, laid down that the monthly rate of interest was 1/80th of the principal (15 per cent) when a pledge or mortgage was given against the loan, 1/60th (20 per cent) when a surety was offered, and 2 per month (24 per cent) when money was lent on personal security.[8] Hārita, whose law-book belonged to this period, also prescribes 24 per cent in case of absence of security.[9] Vṛddha-Hārita adds that double the normal interest (30 per cent) may be taken when there is nothing pledged to secure the debt.[10] Thus by about the ninth century there seems to have taken place an appreciable increase in

[1] 1. 10. 22.
[2] XII. 29. [3] I. 10. 22. [4] XII. 29.
[5] II. 51. [6] III. 11.
[7] *Manu*, VIII. 140; *Yaj.*, 11. 37; *Nar.*, 1. 99; *Bṛ.*, XI. 3.
[8] *HDS*, III, 421.
[9] Quoted in Caṇḍeśvara Ṭhakkura's *Gṛhastharatnākara* (Bibliotheca Indica, Calcutta, 1918), 447.
[10] *HDS*, III, 420-21.

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the rate of normal interest, which in general rose from 12 per cent in the fifth century BC to 24 per cent in the ninth century AD. The strikingly lesser use of coin during the four centuries following the Gupta period leads us to think that the supply of cash was limited and consequently the rate of interest higher. Decline in foreign trade may have been an important reason for want of cash.

The rules quoted seem to apply to ordinary transactions in normal times. Money lent for purposes of trade is charged higher interest. Kauṭilya characterizes 15 per cent as legal but lays down 60 per cent for those who are engaged in ordinary trade, 120 per cent for those traders who traverse forests, and 240 per cent for those who carry on maritime trade.[1] Exactly the same rates for the three grades of traders are laid down by Yājñavalkya,[2] whose eleventh-century scholiast, Vijñāneśvara, explains the reasons for it. According to him these exorbitant rates are justified by the danger of the loss of even the principal as the debtors may perish on account of shipwreck or the attacks of robbers and wild beasts.[3] Since these rates seem to be too excessive for the Maurya period, it seems that they were introduced into the *Arthaśāstra* at a later stage. The other possibility that Yājñavalkya might have borrowed from Kauṭilya seems to be remote.

Besides loans for trade, in certain other cases the interest prescribed is high. Katyāyana, a lawgiver of about the sixth century, ordains that what is lent through friendship, a deposit, balance of interest, and unpaid purchase money, if not returned on demand, begin to carry interest at 5 per cent per month,[4] which works out at the rate of 60 per cent annually. The same rate can be inferred from a provision of Nārada.[5]

The early lawgivers Gautama, Baudhāyana, Āpastamba, and Kauṭilya do not introduce any considerations of varṇa in the payment of interest, which is done for the first time by Vasiṣṭha,[6] and followed by the lawgivers of the early centuries of the Christian era.[7] Brāhmaṇas are required to pay 24 per cent per year, kṣatriyas 36 per cent, vaiśyas 48 per cent, and śūdras 60 per cent.[8] According to the mediaeval commentators (the comment of Nanda Paṇḍita to Viṣṇu

[1] *AŚ*,. III. 11. [2] II. 38.
[3] *Mitākṣarā* on *Yāj.*, II. 38.
[4] Verses 505-6. [5] I. 109. [6] II. 48.
[7] *Manu*, VIII. 142; *Viṣṇu*, VI. 2; *Yāj.*, II. 37; *Nār.*, 1. 100.
[8] ibid.

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VI. 2) it applies to loans without pledges, but this does not account for varṇa discrimination in fixing interest. It might, however, explain a higher rate, i.e. 24 per cent even for the brāhmaṇa which considerably exceeds the normal legal rate of 15 per cent. On the other hand differences in rates according to the varṇas might be explained on the ground of the helplessness of the members of the lower orders, whose economic position was generally worse than those of the higher varṇas.[1] The practice is followed even now in villages where śūdras are charged higher rates of interest. According to the *Sarasvatīvilāsa*, a work of the sixteenth century, these discriminatory laws do not apply if the debtor and the creditor belong to the same caste; in that case the interest shall be at the flat rate of 24 per cent per year. Thus if a kṣatriya gives loan to a kṣatriya he will charge 24 per cent; if to a vaiśya, 36 per cent; and if to a śūdra, 48 per cent.[2] Similarly if a vaiśya gives loan to a vaiśya, he will charge 24 per cent; and if to a śūdra, 36 per cent.[3] The provisions indicate a softening of the varṇa distinctions in matters of interest in late mediaeval times though it would be wrong to think that they were followed to the letter in early mediaeval times. At least the available epigraphic material does not indicate any social distinctions in the levy of interest.

During post-Maurya times in northern and western India endowments in money were invested with guilds, which undertook to pay a certain amount of interest for carrying on worship and meeting the needs of the monks and other religious people. In a Nasik inscription of the second century AD the rate of interest prescribed for payment is lower than that recommended by Manu.[4] The inscription indicates 12 per cent per year, but Manu recommends 15 per cent. The clearest hint of interest rates is thrown by the south Indian inscriptions of the early mediaeval period. Several tenth-century endowments from the Tamil country under the Coḷas suggest 15 per cent as the usual rate of interest. Two inscriptions of the reign of Parāntaka I, one of AD 936[5] and the other of AD 937[6], can be interpreted in this light. In one case 4½ *kalañju* of gold per year was charged as interest on 30 *kalañju*, which was endowed for burning a perpetual lamp[7] in honour of Mahādeva. In

[1]R. S. Sharma, *Some Economic Aspects of the Caste System in Ancient India* (Patna, 1952), 16-21.

[2]*Sarsvatīvilāsa*, quoted in *DK*, I, Part 2, 620. [3]ibid.

[4]D.C. Sircar, *Sel. Inscr.*, I, Bk, II no. 58, ll. 1-3; cf. *Manu*, VIII. 139-142.

[5]*SII*, III, part 3, 237. [6]ibid., 237. [7]ibid., 236.

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another case gold was invested with the residents of a settlement who agreed to pay interest once in six months at the rate of three *mañjāḍi* per *kalañju* annually.[1] Since one *kalañju* is equal to 20 *mañjāḍi*, it works out at the rate of 15 per cent per year. Again, an inscription of AD 986 records that in the reign of Uttama Coḷa 200 *kalañju* of gold was deposited with the inhabitants of four settlements on a perpetual interest of 30 *kalañju* per year, which again amounts to 15 per cent.[2] These three instances would show that on gold invested by temples and similar religious institution, which they received as endowment, the village assemblies paid interest of 15 per cent annually, which was the legal rate (*dharmya*) prescribed by the law-books of ancient and mediaeval times.

But we also come across certain variations, which generally exceed 15 per cent and rarely fall below it. Thus an epigraph of AD 979, belonging to the reign of Uttama Coḷa, records that the assembly of a settlement received 24 *kalañju* and agreed to pay an annual interest of one *kalañju* and four *mañjāḍi* of gold, which amounts to 5 per cent per year.[3] However, as early as the eighth century AD gold given for the perpetual burning of lamp in a temple in the Bāṇa kingdom carried an annual interest of 20 per cent, 4 *kalañju* of gold being fixed as interest on 20 *kalañju*.[4] A century later an epigraph of AD 940, belonging to the reign of Parāntaka I, shows that a yearly interest of 40 per cent was charged on a deposit for religious purposes.[5] These examples show the temples as moneylenders and roughly indicate that the rate of interest in south India generally corresponded to the early Dharmaśāstra rate of 15 per cent and not the later rate of 24 per cent.

The epigraphic evidence for the rate of interest in northern India during the same period is slender. An inscription shows that the Mahājanas of Śīvapura paid 25 per cent interest on the deposit of 6 *gadayanas*,[6] nearly the same as recommended by Vyāsa[7] and Hārita,[8] who prescribe 24 per cent per year. The same rate is mentioned by Alberuni in the eleventh century. He states that only the śūdra is allowed to take percentages as long as his profit is not more than a fiftieth of the capital.[9] Hence in early mediaeval times 24 per cent

[1]ibid., 237. [2]ibid., 274. [3]ibid., 273. [4]*EI*, XI, 228-29.
[5]1/4 *puttakkam* was the interest charged on 1 *ilakkāsu* for one month, and 1 *ilakkāsu* was equal to 7½ *puttakkam*. *SII*, III, part 3, 239.
[6]*EI*, XII, 273. [7]*Gṛhastharatnākara*, 447.
[8]ibid. [9]Ed. and tr. E. Sachau, II, 150.

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seems to have been the normal rate of interest on loans in cash in northern India. This was obviously much less than later rates which allowed the principal to double itself in three years. Later lawgivers do not prescribe any such time-limit, and hence the principal can double in six years and eight months at the rate of 15 per cent annually. But in the ninth or the tenth century, when the normal interest came to be recognized as 24 per cent, it was laid down by Hārita that the principal is doubled after four years and two months at the rate of 8 paṇas per month for 25 purāṇas,[1] one purāṇa being equal to 16 paṇas according to it.

None the less the limit of interest being equal to the principal is generally accepted by all lawgivers. Nārada, however, adds that in some countries a loan grows to twice the principal, in others 3, 4, or 8 times.[2] It is not clear whether he thinks here in terms of cash or kind. Bṛhaspati simply states that the loan and its recovery should be regulated by local custom,[3] which may mean the same thing as Nārada's provision. In the later mediaeval period a passage ascribed to Gautama states that the principal is doubled in sixteen months, which raises the rate of interest to 150 per cent. Thus the tendency to reduce the period in which the interest can reach the maximum seems to be fairly strong in mediaeval times.

As pointed out earlier, the maximum amount of interest that could be claimed by the creditor was equal to the principal,—what is known as *dvaiguṇyam* in legal texts. But if double the principal (including principal and interest) was not paid in time, further interest could be charged. Thus Manu seems to suggest that if the interest becomes equal to the principal and is not paid, it should be compounded with the principal.[4] Kātyāyana lays down that if the creditor does not get twice the amount lent by him, to which he is always entitled, this should be compounded with the capital on which further interest shall accrue.[5] Commenting on Manu, VIII. 155, Medhātithi states that the rate of interest on the new principal should be reduced and continued till such time as does not render it oppressive, the idea being that it should be lower than the former rate. The maximum limit of the interest, more than double the principal, is also contemplated by Vijñāneśvara.

[1] *DK*, I, part 2, 608.
[2] *Nar.*, I. 106-7. [3] XIII. 24.
[4] *Manu*, VIII. 155. [5] Verse 509.

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Commenting on *Yāj.*, II. 39, he stipulates that if the interest is recovered daily, monthly, or yearly and is not claimed in a lump sum at one time, then the total interest received by a creditor may be even more than double the principal lent. This provision is not confined to certain areas or certain articles, as done by Nārada and Bṛhaspati, but made a general rule, which shows that by the eleventh century whatever little prejudice there existed against the maximum accumulation of interest had disappeared, and it could cross the normal limit (double the principal). The law can be better appreciated if we bear in mind the needs of trade which revived in Gujarat and Rajasthan. Since the eleventh century we also find considerable trade in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

The idea of compound interest occurs in Gautama,[1] but since none of his contemporaries mentions it may not have occurred in the original law-book. The provision, however, recurs in Manu,[2] Nārada,[3] and Bṛhaspati.[4] Curiously enough it is not referred to by Kātyāyana, whose laws on interest are very elaborate. Asahāya, who flourished some time in the eighth century, defines and illustrates the practice of compound interest at great length. According to him one *dramma* lent as principal can be multiplied by 500 times, and the process of compound interest can continue for 33 years and 4 months.[5]

Considering the nature of the economy in ancient and early mediaeval times it would be reasonable to expect more loans in kind than in cash. The practice of lending grain was as old as the time of Gautama and Vasiṣṭha. The ancient lawgivers down to the time of Manu seek to regulate the return of a few articles given on loan, but these provisions become more detailed in the law-books from Gupta times onwards. Vasiṣṭha lays down that the return on grain, roots, fruits, and fluids shall be three times, and that on things that can be weighed shall be eight times.[6] It appears that the articles which can be weighed were meant to be loaned to small traders by big traders or producers. Gautama prescribes a higher rate, although he does not differentiate between various kinds of articles. According to him on loans of grain, fruits, wool, and beasts of burden, and products such as ghee and milk from cattle, the total recoverable cannot exceed in

[1] XII. 34-35.
[2] VIII. 156.
[3] *DK*, I, part 2, 625.
[4] XI. 4-9.
[5] *DK*, I, part 2, 625.
[6] II. 44-47.

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any case five times the capital.[1] The provision is literally repeated by Manu.[2] Here again it appears suspicious whether the provision formed a part of the original law-book of Gautama, because his near contemporary Vasiṣṭha mentions a rate of only 3 times on grain. Viṣṇu[3] and Nārada[4] lay down the following schedule more or less on similar lines:

gold	2 times
grain	3 times
cloth	4 times
liquids	8 times
women and cattle	one issue

Bṛhaspati's provision regarding gold is exactly the same as that of the two lawgivers but is somewhat different regarding other articles, as would appear from the following[5]:

gold	2 times
cloth and base metals	3 times
grain, edible plants, cattle, and wool	4 times
pot-herbs	5 times
seeds and sugarcane	6 times
salt, oil, and spirit	8 times

Kātyāyana's provision on the point is detailed. According to him precious stones, pearls, corals, gold, silver, fruits, silk, and wool increase by two times; base metals by five times; and oils, liquors, ghee, raw sugar, salt, and land by eight times.[6] That the loan of land increases by eight times is also confirmed by Pitāmaha, who is assigned to AD 600-900.[7] Here the striking thing is the provision for the loan of land, on which eightfold return would mean eight times the produce from one harvest.

Viṣṇu and Bṛhaspati mention certain articles on which increase in interest is unlimited. Viṣṇu states that on wool, cotton, thread, leather, shield, weapon, bricks, coal, etc., there is no limit to interest[8] (*akṣaya*). Bṛhaspati declares that on these articles no interest is ordained.[9] The term *akṣaya*, used by Viṣṇu, is interpreted in another context as 100 times by the *Smṛticandrikā*,[10] which refers to flowers, fruits, roots, etc., in this connection.

[1]XII. 36 [2]VIII. 151
[3]VI. 11-15. [4]I. 106-7. [5]X1. 13-15.
[6]Verses 510-12. [7]*DK*, I, part 2, 634.
[8]VI. 16. [9]XI. 16. [10]*DK*, I, part 2, 609.

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It is difficult to account for the difference concerning the maximum accumulation of various articles given on loan. As regards grain, difference in rate ranged from three times prescribed by Vasiṣṭha and Viṣṇu and Nārada to five times prescribed by Gautama and Manu. In between comes Bṛhaspati, who makes it four times. Kātyāyana does not mention it. The difference does not seem to be chronological but regional, for Nārada points out that in certain countries interest grows three, four, or five times.

It is obvious that for day-to-day use the common folk would be more in need of grain, seeds, cattle, etc., than in need of cash. This would be particularly true of the early medieval period which was marked by less of trade, urbanism and coinage. High rates charged for cereals and other articles remind us of similar rates prescribed for vaiśyas, and particularly śūdras, in giving them loans in cash. Apparently in extending loans to the common folk the lawgivers had in mind their inability to pay in time. Another factor that led to the demand for a higher return in the case of some articles was their perishable nature. Since gold and silver were more lasting and valuable, they could increase by two times. On the other hand there was no limit to interest on cheap articles of common use such as ferment (*kiṇva*), cotton, thread, leather, shield, weapons, bricks, charcoal, all enumerated by Nārada and Bṛhaspati, and roots, fruits, flowers, etc., added by the *Smṛticandrikā*. It is remarkable that fruits, on which according to earlier lawgivers the return ranged from two to five times, came to be considered in the mediaeval age as a source of exploiting the people who borrowed it. We may add that other articles which were intended to secure a return of 100 times were also to be used by the common people, who, in consequence of their borrowing, could not be free from the eternal obligation of serving their creditors in various ways. What might explain the provision for return on certain marketable commodities such as base metals, salt, raw sugar, liquor, ghee, oil, etc., is the fact that these were borrowed by retail traders who were supposed to earn more profit on them. The provision for borrowing land and giving eightfold return on it, given by Kātyāyana and corroborated by Pitāmaha, seems to be unique in early medieval India. It looks like the practice of temporary subinfeudation, for the land so borrowed would have to be returned to the creditor. In effect it would mean adding to the number of temporary tenants. Perhaps such a law refers to a period of economic or political crisis

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when the distressed and uprooted peasants approached the landowners for some plots of land in search of livelihood.

Very few lawgivers set the time-limit for reaching the maximum in regard to articles given on loan, although it is reasonable to expect such a limit. Commenting on a passage of Hārita,[1] Caṇḍeśvara points out that if payment is made with the gathering of the next harvest within two to three months, grain (taken on loan) becomes double; if it is not given back at that time, it becomes treble but not more than that,[2] an explanation also given in a work of the fifteenth century.[3] According to Hārita this also applies to wool and cotton given on loan.[4] Ghee, salt, and raw sugar increase eightfold in a year according to Hārita and the commentary of Caṇḍeśvara in his *Vivādaratnākara* on him.[5] It appears that in mediaeval times this time-limit of one year was prescribed for all articles made over as loan except grain, wool, and cotton for the return of which two or three months were allowed.

III. Kinds of Interest

It is curious that the forms of interest seem to be fairly well-developed in the law-book of Gautama, ascribable to the fifth-third centuries BC. It mentions six kinds of interest: compound, periodical, stipulated, corporal (*kāyikā*), daily, and pledge-using.[6] But Manu, who is placed later than Gautama, mentions only four kinds,[7] which raises doubts about the antiquity of this provision inserted in Gautama. Whatever be the precise dating of these provisions, it is definite that the various forms of interest were defined in detail some time between the fifth and seventh centuries AD. Thus Nārada not only[8] enumerates four kinds of interest but also defines each one of them. Bṛhaspati makes it six and describes each one of them in some detail.[9] According to him the *kāyikā* (corporal interest?) means the milk of a pledged cow

[1] *tule tu dviguṇaṃ dhānyaṃ triguṇameva vardhate. DK*, I, 608.
[2] *Vivādaratnākara* quoted ibid., 608-9.
[3] *Vivādacandra* of Misaru Mishra quoted ibid. It seems that the principal is to be collected in addition to this.
[4] ibid. [5] ibid.
[6] *cakrakālavṛddhiḥ kāritākāyikāśikhādhibhogaśca.* XII. 31-32 quoted in *DK*, I, part 2, 607.
[7] VIII. 154. [8] II. 87-89 quoted in *DK*, I, part 2, 624-25.
[9] XI. 4-9.

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or animals used by the creditor, which thus excludes the exploitation of the physical labour of the debtor by the creditor. Periodical interest (*kālikā*) means monthly payment. Stipulated interest (*kāritā*) implies the interest promised by the borrower over and above the normal interest in times of distress. Compound interest (*cakravṛddhi*) is interest received everyday; it does not cease growing except on the loss of the head. Interest-bearing pledge (*bhogalābha*) is interest by enjoyment, such as the use of a mortgaged house, the produce of a field, etc.[1] Bṛhaspati adds that hair-interest, corporal interest, and interest by enjoyment shall be taken by the creditor as long as the principal remains unpaid.[2] We do not know why this rule does not apply to periodical (*kālikā*) and stipulated (*kāritā*) forms of interest. Perhaps the first four forms of interest are deducted from capital, but neither of the last two reduces the capital in any way. A later lawgiver, Kātyāyana, does not mention all the six forms of interest, for periodical and compound varieties are left out by him. He, however, devotes seven verses (502-8) to *akṛta vṛddhi*, unagreed interest, not found in other texts. There he contemplates imposition of interest under various conditions. Thus when a person takes a temporary loan and goes to another country before repayment, it begins to acquire interest after a year.[3] If a person after taking a loan goes to another country without repaying it even when pressed by the lender, that loan begins to acquire interest within three months.[4] When the borrower of a thing does not return it on demand, the king should make him pay interest since the day of demand, though it was not agreed upon when he was in the country, and though he be unwilling to pay interest.[5] It is apparent that all the cases carry an interest of 5 per cent.

In about the eighth century Asahāya, commenting on the four forms of interest prescribed by Nārada, deals at some length with each one of these. *Kālikā* or periodical interest is that where payment is made every month.[6] *Kāritā* is that which is agreed to by the debtor in times of distress according to the interest laid down by the law-books; here the debtor agrees to pay a higher interest, say 10 per cent more.[7] *Kāyikā* is explained by Asahāya at some length. Herein the capital (*dravyapiṇḍa*) is considered to be *kāya*, and the daily interest that

[1]ibid.
[2]XI. II.
[3]Verse 502.
[4]Verse 503.
[5]Verse 504.
[6]*DK*, I, part 2, 625.
[7]ibid.

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accrues on it in the form of *paṇa* or a *pāda* does not reduce it in any way, and the capital remains as it was. According to Asahāya this interest is paid by the debtor in the form of daily wages (*divasabhāṭaka-vṛddhyācāreṇa*), which incidentally does not amount to more than a *paṇa* or *pāda*.[1] *Cakravṛddhi*, as shown earlier, is explained in detail by Asahāya. Here the capital can increase 500 times, and the king is instructed to make the debtor pay the interest.[2]

Of the forms of interest prevalent from the beginning of the Christian era onwards there is some confusion about the interpretation of the *kāyikā*. It is not clear from the lawgivers whether the bodily labour of the debtor could be exploited by the creditor in lieu of interest, but the commentators imply this clearly. Asahāya indicates that the interest has to be paid in the form of daily wages, which obviously would accrue to the debtor as his remuneration for working for the creditor.[3]

An early mediaeval lawgiver, Vyāsa, explains *kāyikā* as that which is accompanied by milching and carrying (*dohyavāhya-karmasaṃyutā*).[4] This is explained by Caṇḍeśvara as pledging cows and oxen.[5]

Medhātithi, commenting on Manu, VIII. 153, made it clear that the *kāyikā* interest has to be cleared through bodily labour.[6] This is roundly supported by Govindarāja (eleventh century),[7] and Haradatta (1100-1300).[8] Sarvajñanārāyaṇa, who belonged to the same period as Haradatta, commenting on Manu, VIII. 153, states that bodily service should be rendered gradually till the principal is not cleared.[9] A verse quoted in the *Smṛticandrikā* of Devaṇṇabhaṭṭa (1150-1225) states that *kāyikā* is based on performance of work.[10] In the ancient period failure to pay debts (which would include both the principal and the interest) was an important source of slavery. The provision to make the debtors work in lieu of interest so long as the capital was not paid implies some kind of bonded labour in early mediaeval times. Such rules leave clear scope for enjoying the manual labour of the

[1]ibid. [2]ibid. [3]ibid.
[4]*DK*, I, part 2, 634.
[5]*Vivādaratnākara* quoted ibid.
[6]*kāyakarmaṇā saṃśodhyā*. *DK*, I, part 2, 616.
[7]ibid., 617.
[8]*Gautama-Mitākṣarā* quoted ibid., 607.
[9]ibid., 617.
[10]*kāyikā kāryakarmaṇā*, *DK*, I, part 2, 635.

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debtor in return for interest and remind us of the continuing practice according to which several generations of the same family are reduced to the position of hereditary ploughmen in consideration of a paltry sum advanced to them. Therefore, in view of the general paucity of coins in the four centuries following the fall of the Gupta empire, *kāyikā* should be considered an important and widely prevalent form of interest. However, only the members of a caste lower than that of the creditor could be subjected to bodily labour for recovery of loans, and consequently the incidence of this interest fell more heavily on the members of lower orders.

In the economic context of early mediaeval times the practice of giving pledge for interest deserves as much attention as *kāyikā*. Mentioned in the earlier law-books of Gautama and Manu, pledge became obligatory and prevalent from Gupta times onwards. Bṛhaspati lays down that a creditor should never lend money without having first secured a pledge of adequate value or a deposit, or some trustworthy security, nor without a bond written by the debtor himself.[1] Along with Nārada[2] he[3] provides for the enjoyment of pledge in lieu of interest. According to him the pledge which was not given in lieu of interest lapses to the creditor a fortnight after the date when the principal is doubled or the stipulated period has expired.[4] On the contrary according to Nārada, the foolish fellow who enjoys the pledge without the authorization of the owner should enjoy only half the interest.[5] Again, the creditor who enjoys pledge (*bandhaka*) without the term (period) of the debt being complete out of greed is not entitled to any profit, for such a pledge should be protected like deposit (*nyāsa*); if it is not, interest is destroyed.[6] The same idea is expressed by Nārada according to whom a pledge should not be used by force; if the creditor does so he should surrender the interest due to him from his debtor. Moreover, he must compensate the owner for the pledge or else he is considered a thief appropriating the pledge.[7]

Early mediaeval law-books represent fields as an important form of pledge; this form is not mentioned by Gautama and Manu or any other early lawgiver. In his provisions regarding pledge Yājñavalkya

[1]XI. I. [2]I. 129. [3]XI. 7-8.
[4]*Br.*, XI. 27. [5]I. 128.
[6]*Br.* quoted in *DK*, I, part 2, 350.
[7]IV. 127 (quoted in *DK*, I, part 2, 650).

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gives no indication whatsoever that field was given as pledge for enjoyment in lieu of interest, nor does Nārada[1] specify it. The first to include fields as a source of interest is Bṛhaspati. According to him the use of a mortgaged house or the produce of a field is termed *bhogalābha* (interest by enjoyment).[2] Together with Kātyāyana he lays down several provisions regarding the enjoyment of fields. Kātyāyana provides that the boundaries of the house or the land to be pledged and the villages or the countries in which they are situated be defined.[3] The details about the identity of villages made over as religious gifts were given, and the procedure may have appeared in secular transactions. Bṛhaspati ordains that one field mortgaged to two creditors at the same time shall belong to that mortgagee who was the first to obtain possession of it.[4] If both have possessed it for an equal length of time, it shall be held in common (or shared equally) by them.[5] Bṛhaspati ordains that when a field or other immovable property has been enjoyed and the principal and interest actually got out of it by the creditor, the debtor receives back his pledge.[6] This shows that land was given towards the payment of both the principal and the interest. Kātyāyana adds that the debtor can get back his field, etc., given for enjoyment as interest, from the creditor on paying back the amount he had taken.[7] On the contrary, according to Bṛhāspati, when a house or field is mortgaged for use and the period fixed for such use does not expire, the debtor cannot recover his property nor can the creditor recover his loan.[8] But when the stipulated period has elapsed both parties are at liberty to do so. Nevertheless, even before the stipulated period has expired, they may make a special arrangement for recovery by mutual consent.[9]

The practice of mortgaging land for interest, which began towards the end of the Gupta period, continued widely for another three or four centuries. Thus Asahāya (700-750), commenting on two kinds of pledge mentioned by Nārada, cites a house and a field as instances of a pledge for use.[10] Similarly, commenting on Manu VIII. 143, Medhātithi states that a cow is given as *ādhi* to the creditor for using its milk, and a piece of land or garden is given as *ādhi* for enjoying its produce; hence the creditor is not entitled to any interest (*vṛddhi* or

[1] I. 125. [2] XI. 7-8. [3] Verse 522.
[4] XI. 34. [5] *Bṛ.*, XI. 34. [6] *Bṛ.*, XI. 23.
[7] Verse 516. [8] XI. 32.
[9] *Bṛ.*, XI. 33. [10] *SBE*, XXXIII, 73 fn.

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kusīda). Vyāsa, who probably belonged to the same period as Medhātithi, explains *ādhi* similarly. When somebody accepts money (*dravya*) having settled interest on it and asks the creditor to enjoy his field in return for interest and to apply the excess towards the payment of principal, it is called *ādhi* or *sapratyaya bhogyādhiḥ*; it is released when twice the amount of the loan is paid.[1] Even where land is not pledged it can be sold to clear off the debts. According to Bharadvāja if the debtor is unable to pay, his property is to be sold for payment, including his land, fields, garden, and house.[2] This again points to the practice of pledging land for the payment of debts. Curiously enough the *Mitākṣarā* does not favour it. But the practice certainly obtained in early mediaeval times, and must have added to the landed property of the creditors on failure of payment of the principal. It is even stated that pledges of land can be enjoyed for one hundred years, like a form of commendation in the feudal context. In mediaeval Europe the poor people surrendered their land to some lord in return for protection. But here it was done in return for a loan. Commendation in Europe entitled the lord to a share of the produce of land surrendered in return for protection afforded by him, but pledge of land in India authorized him to enjoy its whole produce.

Actual instances of mortgage of land are wanting in India, but the provisions of the law-books belonging to AD 600-900 suggest that the practice was widespread. At least two epigraphic records from northern India indicate the mortgage of land. A deed of mortgage (*vittabandha*) of AD 1212 shows the influential head of a Śaivite temple accepting mortgage of a village in consideration of an amount advanced to the mortgagee,[3] which might imply pledge in lieu of interest. In this case the mortgagee was given all the rights of collecting taxes;[4] he also appears to have been empowered to hold the village in pledge as long as he wished, probably meaning thereby till all the dues were cleared.[5] The other, the Jaunpur brick inscription of AD 1217, shows that a person borrowed 2,250 *drammas* on the security of cultivated lands.[6] There may have been more inscriptions of this type.

As shown earlier, numerous epigraphic records refer to the invest-

[1] *DK*, I, part 2, 658.
[2] ibid., 731.
[3] *EI*, XXV, no. 1, lines 10-21.
[4] ibid.
[5] The meaning of l. 19 is not clear. *EI*, XXV, p. 3.
[6] *JASB*, XIX, 454-6.

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ment of gold by the temples for burning perpetual lamp and performing regular worship, but they do not specify anywhere the mortgage of land by the village assembly or the debtors for the purpose. However, the terms of investment do imply full or partial use of land by the temples in lieu of interest on the principal, mostly made up of a certain measure of gold usually advanced to the village assembly, which set apart a part of the produce of the land as interest for maintaining the offerings on lamps. Thus in AD 877-78 the Pāṇḍya king Varaguṇa-Maharāja granted to a temple 290 *kāśu* of gold, in return for which the members of the temples assembly undertook to measure out 580 *kalam* of paddy per year (as interest, at the rate of two *kalam* for each *kāśu* for meeting the requirements of the offerings "for a long time."[1] Significantly enough all the articles meant for offerings and enumerated in a long list given in the Pāṇḍya inscription are priced in terms of paddy, which indicates that the use of coin was very limited at this stage in south India. Thus the interest on the investment of gold was collected in crops, for which it was necessary to set apart certain fields. This can be also inferred from other inscriptions. An epigraph of the reign of Āditya I informs us that a priest of the temple of Airāvateśvara received from a Pallava queen the gold assuring her that, from the interest accruing at the rate of 1/8 of every crop on each *kaḷañju*, he would maintain the charity; the gift was placed under the protection of the assembly of all Māhaeśvaras.[2] So here also the deposit in gold bears interest in crop. An inscription of AD 910 informs us that the wife of the son of the Coḷa king Parāntaka I gave 60 *kaḷañju* of pure gold as capital to the members of the assembly of a temple who undertook to supply in perpetuity 60 *kalam* of paddy per year, at the rate of 30 *kalam* per harvest[3] as interest. From the Madras Museum plates of Uttama-Coḷa we learn that in AD 992 the assemblies of two places received 250 *kaḷañju* of gold from the temple and agreed to measure every year as interest thereon 500 *kāḍi* of paddy.[4] According to a document of the same year 50 *kaḷañju* was received by the assembly of Uḷai-ūr, which agreed to render annually an interest thereon of 150 *kāḍi* of paddy.[5] In the eighth year of Pārthivendravarman a village assembly received 15 *kaḷañju* of gold for a temple, and agreed to pay an annual interest of 50 *kāḍi* of paddy

[1] *EI*, IX, 91-94.
[2] *SII*, III, part 3, 227. [3] ibid., 229.
[4] ibid., 273. [5] ibid.

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on that amount.[1] These examples from the ninth to the eleventh century have been cited to show that in return for gold lent to them on behalf of the temples the assemblies provided certain quantities of produce, probably by earmarking certain fields owned by the assemblies for the service of the gods. An epigraphic record of the second half of the tenth century shows that land was sold to the temples for gold.[2] In several cases in the Coḷa dominions in return for gold the land was made tax-free and its produces transferred to the temples, so that the whole produce of the land was given as compensation for the principal in gold. All these allied practices fit in well with the custom of using the produce of fields in return for money loaned to their owners, which must have greatly added to the landed property of the temples in south India.

We have hardly any instance of temples in north India lending gold directly for interest collected in the form of crops or land attached to them. But the Āhār stone inscription shows how the revenues of the temple of the goddess Kanakadevī, situated in the town of Tattānandapura, probably identical with modern Āhāra in Rajasthan,[3] invested its revenues in the purchase of houses which were let out on rent. The process covers a period of nearly 40 years from AD 864 to 904,[4] and shows that the rent of the houses was estimated in terms of money, to be spent on regular worship in the temple. In all, the inscription contains eight documents, of which four clearly refer to the rent enjoyed by the temple on the *āvārīs*, houses or shops, let out by it.[5] Particularly, Document No. X speaks of the purchase of six *āvārīs*, the rent accruing from which was to be religiously applied to the provision of saffron, incense, flowers, lamps, and flags, and to whitewashing and the repairs of the broken portions of the temples—a condition which is attached to the rent derived from another house acquired by the temple with its own *drammas*.[6] Of these four, two documents clearly refer to surety of house in lieu of 10 *vimśopakas* to be paid to the temple every month.[7] This was a limited kind of surety, for in each case the rent of the house was to be enjoyed by the descendants of the donor after they had paid every month to the temple.[8] This would

[1]ibid, 363. [2]*SII*, III, part 3, 263.
[3]R. D. R. Sahni, *EI*, XIX, no. 7. [4]*EI*, XIX, no. 7.
[5]ibid., Document nos. II, IV, VIII and X.
[6]ibid., Document no. II.
[7]ibid., Document nos. IV and VIII. [8]ibid.

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imply that the house was owned jointly by the owner and the management of the temple, who enjoyed it as a form of pledge tendered to them. However, in the second case, according to Document No. VIII it appears that probably the descendants of the donor were given some money by the temple in consideration of which they made over the entire rent of the house by a deed of ninety-nine years to the holy Kanakaśrīdevī (so that here the rent would be in the form of interest accruing on the principal invested on the lease of the house). In four other cases, i.e., Document Nos. V, VI, VII, and IX, it is not mentioned whether houses acquired out of the funds of the temple were let out on rent, but the context of the inscription leaves no doubt about it. All these instances show that the temple of Kanakaśrī did not derive any interest on its investments, as did the temples in south India, but received rent from the houses which were purchased with its funds. In form, rent and interest cannot be taken to be the same, but in substance there is hardly any difference between the two. Rent on houses purchased by the temple was obviously the interest accruing on the money with which the houses were purchased.

In the town of Tattānandapura several other temples seem to have lived on rent. This practice could be linked with increasing trade and commerce since the end of the ninth century in western India. What further distinguishes this town is the fact that rent was to be collected in money, which is not found in the case of south Indian temples which lent the principal in gold but charged interest in paddy or crops. Since many persons from whom houses were purchased by the temple were merchants, Tattānandapura was apparently a great centre of trade and commerce which put considerable amounts of money in circulation.

IV. Exemptions from Payment of Interest, and Debt Collection

Exemption from interest on religious grounds is allowed by Kauṭilya, according to whom no interest can be charged where the debtor is engaged in a Vedic sacrifice of long duration, or staying at his teacher's house (*gurukula*) for study, or is a minor, or is a man without substance.[1] We do not know whether this provision, mainly in favour of priests, continued in later times.

Normally, both on money and a commodity, the borrower had to

[1] *AS*, III. 11.

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pay interest in early mediaeval times. But under certain conditions exemption was allowed. No interest could be charged on a short-term loan from a friend unless agreed.[1] It could yield interest only if the debtor refused to restore it on demand by the creditor.[2] So here exemption from interest is governed mainly by the nature of personal relations between the debtor and the creditor. According to Nārada no interest can be charged on wages, on a deposit, on a fine, on that which has been idly promised (to bards and the like), and on the stake won in gambling, unless there is an express agreement to pay interest.[3] Kātyāyana also lays down a similar but detailed injunction that hides (or armour), crops, wine, gambling debts, the price of commodities sold, the bride price of women and debts incurred as surety do not bear interest at any time.[4] Oddly enough, he recommends at another place eightfold interest on liquor;[5] we do not know how to explain it. Certain abnormal conditions invalidate interest. Thus Vasiṣṭha declares that interest stops the moment the king dies and begins to run only after the coronation of the successor.[6] Perhaps it is apprehended that in the absence of the king or in a state of anarchy exorbitant interest might be exacted, and hence the basic condition for any normal activity is political order and stability. This provision is elaborated by Prājāpati, a lawgiver assignable to the period AD 600-900. He states that 'in famines, countrywide disturbance (*rāṣṭrasambādhe*), religious work, and distress, only the principal debt is to be given, not the interest; this is definite.'[7] This probably refers to natural calamities, peasant unrest and other types of crisis in early mediaeval times and runs counter to the view expressed in the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* that interest grows in all circumstances.

In collecting interest and the principal from the debtors, creditors were backed by the authority of both the state and religion. The Buddhist Order did not admit a person who had not cleared off his debts. The Buddhists dwelt on the virtues of paying off debts. Nārada declares that if the fellow does not pay off his debts, the amount goes on increasing till it reaches one hundred *koṭis* (1,000 million), and the person not

[1] *Nar.*, I 108; *Kātyā*, verse 505.
[2] *Nar.*, I. 109; *Kātyā*, verse 505.
[3] *Nar.*, II. 36. [4] Verse 508.
[5] Verse 511. Here the term used is *madya* and not *āsava* as in verse 508.
[6] II, 49. [7] Quoted in *DK*, I, part 2, 715.

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paying it is born again and again as a horse, an ass, an ox, and a slave.[1] Kātyāyana adds that such a debtor is born as a slave, a servant, a man, or a beast in the house of the creditor.[2] But these curses are not considered enough to make the debtor pay. The authority of the state is therefore invoked to enforce payment. Nārada states that if the debtor, in spite of being wealthy, does not pay out of bad disposition, he shall be compelled to pay by the king who will be entitled to one-thirtieth of the amount in question.[3] This is less than the fourth payable to the king according to Manu in case of debt collection with royal help.[4] Nārada does not make it clear whether this one-thirtieth of the amount in question payable to the king is over and above the interest and the principal he has to pay. But commenting on Manu, VIII. 176, Medhātithi makes it clear that the creditor shall be paid the whole amount; and the fine, one-fourth of the total debt, shall be paid by the debtor to the king in addition to what he pays to the creditor.

Even if the debtor had no means to clear off his dues, he could not be let off. Manu enjoins the creditor to compel the member of an equal caste or a lower caste to do sufficient manual labour to repay the principal plus interest, although members of higher castes are made to pay gradually.[5] Thus exploitation of the physical labour of the debtor was considered to be an effective legal way of collecting debts. What is important to note is that this had the backing of the king.[6]

In the case of the death of the debtor his son is placed under the obligation of paying the debt with interest up to the expiry of the term,[7] otherwise the property of the deceased person can be put up for sale. Bṛhaspati ordains that if gold (*hiraṇya*) lent is doubled and the debtor is dead or destroyed, his wealth (*dravya*) shall be seized and sold in the presence of witnesses. The price so received shall be kept in safety for ten days in the presence of the people, and the amount on account of the debt (*ṛṇānurūpam*) shall be accepted and the rest returned.[8]

The provisions regarding the recovery of debt enumerated above give the creditor the upper hand. But certain other provisions seem to protect the interests of the debtor. According to Kauṭilya those who

[1]Quoted in *DK*, I, part 2, 695. [2]Verse 591. [3]Quoted in *DK*, I, part 2, 724.
[4]VIII. 176. [5]*Manu*, VIII. 177. [6]ibid. VIII. 178.
[7]*Br*. quoted in *DK*, I, part 2, 707.
[8]*Br*. quoted in *Vivādaratnākara*, quoted ibid. 726.

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exceed prescribed rates shall be punished with an ordinary fine, and each of the witnesses to such usurious transactions shall be punished with half as much.[1] Such a punishment is hardly provided by any Smṛti in early mediaeval times, when rates of interest higher than those prescribed as legal are condemned as usurious and immoral, but except for pious denunciations we do not have anything effective against the offenders.

On the other hand according to Gautama and Yājñavalkya if the debtor offers to repay the loan and the creditor refuses to accept it interest stops when the debtor deposits the money in the hands of a third person.[2] Nārada gives a little more protection to the debtor. According to him if the creditor, though pressed by the debtor, does not give an acquittance for the sum paid to him by the debtor, the sum shall yield interest to the debtor henceforth as it had done to the creditor previously.[3] This lawgiver seems to be favourably disposed towards the debtor.

V. Conclusion

It is possible to differentiate between the ancient and mediaeval systems of lending. In ancient times the vaiśyas were permitted to live on interest, but in early mediaeval times even brāhmaṇas and kṣatrīyas were allowed to practise lending on interest, which was generally forbidden to them in ancient times. In south India the temples became important moneylenders.

The laws regarding interest generally seem to favour the creditors in early mediaeval times. Kauṭilya, prescribes some punishment for charging usurious interest, but in this he is not followed by later authorities. In spite of their strong disapproval of usury, particularly of lending grain and charging interest on it, by some lawgivers and commentators of the early mediaeval period, no attempt is made to protect the interests of the debtors in concrete terms.

The ancient normal rate of interest, 15 per cent yearly, was prescribed by the mediaeval legal texts too, but several lawgivers of about the seventh-ninth centuries raised this to 24 per cent, which was more than 50 per cent. Since the list of returns on account of interest on various commodities, including grain, is given separately, it is reasonable to suppose that the increased rate of interest applied to moneylending. In our opinion this increase does not seem to be so much the

[1] III. 11. [2] *Gautama*, XII. 33; *Yāj.*, II. 44. [3] *Nār.*, I. 115.

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indication of a stronger tendency of exploitation or of the growing importance of the rentier class as of the comparative absence of metal money and decline of trade in the three centuries following the fall of the Gupta empire.

Varṇa distinctions in the rate of interest are rare in the more ancient texts, but some post-Maurya texts introduce the principle of the lower the varṇa the higher is the interest. We do not know how far it was observed, but it certainly reflects the lesser capacity of members of the lower orders to pay in time.

The detailed laws regarding interest on such commodities as grain, cotton, milk products, salt, sugar, fruits, etc., laid down by the law-givers of Gupta times and their successors show that these were lent to traders as well as ordinary peasant consumers. They create the impression that loans in kind were more frequent than those in cash in early mediaeval times—a feature in keeping with the largely self-sufficient and predominantly agrarian of the economy of the period.

An important form of interest that attracts attention in early mediaeval times is *kāyikā* or bodily interest. First mentioned in Gautama and Manu, it is explained by Nārada and Bṛhaspati, and by the mediaeval commentators. They generally agree that in this case interest must be paid through services rendered either by the debtor himself or by his cows, oxen, or slaves. The latter alternative could apply only in the case of men of means; debtors of ordinary rank would be reduced to the position of semi-slaves. Thus paying interest through bodily labour could prevail only in an economy where the use of money was limited on account of less of trade and urbanism.

What distinguished the mediaeval mode of interest was the introduction of land in its mechanism. On the one hand land was mortgaged or its produce earmarked by the debtors in lieu of interest on the principal which they received in money or gold; on the other land was given on loan to the debtors who were required to return eight times the harvest at the maximum. Both cases involve peasant debtors; while the former practice reminds us of commendation, the latter resembles grant of benefices or subinfeudation. The second practice presup poses the presence of such families as possessed large acreage and it seems that one of the methods to get it cultivated was to lease plots of land to needy peasants at exorbitant rates of payment in kind. At any rate the two practices fit in with some kind of feudal economy in which there was less scope for payment in money.

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CHAPTER XV

An Analysis of Land Grants and their Value for Economic History

It is difficult to appreciate the potentialities of the land charters for the study of social and economic developments without analysing the contents of a typical land grant. Generally a charter deals with the donor, the donee, the officers, the fiscal dues, the donated land or village, occasions for grants and the purpose of the grant. Towards the end, most grants provide imprecations, and many mention the names of the executors and writers. The details about the donor include his ancestry for several generations, usually five or six, and in many cases his lineage is traced back to the solar or the lunar dynasty. The grant recounts his conquests, never mentioning his defeats. He carries a good number of epithets, which indicate his political status, religious affiliation and some of his achievements, although in an exaggerated tone. He appears as a paragon of virtues, and occasionally his accomplishments in art and literature are lauded. His benefactions in the cause of religion are highlighted. The grant also specifies the donor's capital or the victory camp (*jayaskandhāvāra*) from where it is issued.

The antecedents of the donees or the beneficiaries are also given at some length. Since usually they happen to be brāhmaṇas, they are identified by their *gotras* and *pravaras*, and generally their original home, the place from where they or their ancestors migrated, is signified. But their family tree does not contain as many generations as that of the donors, although some of their reputed forefathers, noted for their learning are duly noticed. The Vedic branch of learning to which they are wedded is mentioned, and their literary achievements and personal attributes are glorified. All these details together with the description of the land or village granted to them provide good material for the study of the migration of the brāhmaṇas and their settlements. We have quite a few grants in which the brāhmaṇa donees appear in hundreds and thousands.

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The third important element in the land donation record is the list of officers, either with both proper names and functional designations or only with designations, who are informed of the land grant. The list is not exhaustive, but it generally follows some hierarchical order and enumerates most functionaries irrespective of their ranks. These state employees perform fiscal, scribal, military and administrative functions, which in many cases are overlapping. Nevertheless designations throw light on the nature of the state organisation, and proper names on the role of the caste.

Taxes from which the donee or the donated land or village is granted exemptions constitute an integral part of the contents of land grants. The list of taxes differs from area to area and from time to time. In some grants all fiscal dues are specified, but in others their listing contains the terms 'et cetra', 'fixed [and] not fixed', 'proper [and] improper.' However the object of particularising various dues, in cash, kind or labour for purposes of exemption is to transfer them to the beneficiary, who is also conceded several important political and administrative immunities. In other land grants taxes and powers of administration are explicitly delegated in a positive manner. Some charters specifically transfer peasants and artisans living in a village and also cultivators occupying a piece of land; others give the beneficiary the right practically to evict the existing peasants and inducte the new ones.

Generally the list of taxes and immunities is linked with the description of the pieces of the donated land or the village, the location and identification of which form another important element in a land grant. The name of the village and the description of its physical situation may indicate whether it lies within a virgin, semi-virgin or settled area. Its boundaries, defined in many instances, may further enlighten us about its geographical and ecological background. More light is thrown on this subject when the agrarian resources such as crops, trees, tanks, pastures, etc., are mentioned. In addition to this many land grants also name, sometimes in hierarchical order, the fiscal and administrative units in which the land/village is situated. The village elders and various types of inhabitants, identified castewise, find place in many land grants. They may give us a good idea of the social configuration of the village. However not much information is available about land distribution in a village. Only when a good many donees are introduced, the area allotted to each one of

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them is itemised, but such collective land grants, made generally to groups of brāhmaṇas, do not show much of unequal distribution of land.

Occasions for grants of land or villages are mentioned in the charters. These may be various kinds of Vedic sacrifices described in the Śrautasūtras, on which numerous commentaries were written in medieval times. Many of these sacrifices were performed by improvised kṣatriya princes to legitimatise their position and by the older ones to strengthen it and make it more prestigious. Performance of domestic sacrifices and sacraments (*saṃskāras*) could also be good occasions for land gifts. Visits to places of pilgrimage or *tīrthas*, which became a common practice in early mediaeval times, were celebrated by the ruling chiefs through grants of land. In many cases sacrifices and pilgrimages were linked with victories in war, which provided another important opportunity for making gifts, partly as thanksgiving and partly as a means of consolidating the conquests.

The intentions behind the grant and the purpose for which it is made are explicitly stated in many charters. It is very difficult to demarcate between motives and objectives. The donor grants land for his own spiritual welfare and also for that of his ancestors and family members; the acquisition and increase of the spiritual merit and reputation of the parents is frequently given as a ground for the grant. But the donees are given land/village for performing certain religious rites—this is particularly the case with the temples—and for cultivating some branch of Vedic learning or running a religious-cum-educational institution called *agrahāra*. The *agrahāras* and *brahmadeyas* provided subsistence to brāhmaṇas which is almost clearly. The grants made to temples, mathas, Buddhist monasteries and Jain *basadis* were meant to enable them to perform religious, educational and charitable functions. Although there were some instances of revocation, the grants do not ask the beneficiaries to perform these functions or face resumption. On the other hand the successor princes are threatened with all kinds of calamities if they resume the grants. The political or social obligations of the beneficiaries towards the donors are hardly stated. According to some charters called *kara-śāsana* the donees are asked to pay some taxes, and in other cases they are asked to shun treason or sedition against the king, but the latter condition is probably taken for granted and rarely laid down in the charter.

Most land grants bear the name of the writer and the executor; the latter is invariably an officer connected with war and peace and

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is therefore called *sāndhivigrahika*. The name of the literate artisan who incises the grant appears in many charters.

It is well known that land grants are exclusively epigraphic records inscribed on stone and copper-plates. Although the law-books of Gupta times indicate that grants were recorded on perishable material such as cloth and the bark of the birch tree, they have not survived down to our times. The earliest decipherable inscriptions, which were issued by Aśoka, refer to the remission of land revenue in one instance on religious grounds, but do not speak of any land grants although the practice is sanctioned by the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya. The first epigraphic land grants were issued in the first century BC by the Sātavāhanas in the Deccan and not by their contemporaries Kusāṇas, who, as foreign rulers, had good grounds for rewarding their followers and Buddhist supporters with portions of the conquered territories. Epigraphic land grants were not altogether absent in northern India in the first and second centuries AD, but more grants were issued by the Sātavāhanas and the Ikṣavākus. The Deccan grants were followed on a good scale by those made by the Gupta feudatories in the fourth and fifth centuries in central India. Although only a few grants of the Gupta emperors are available land was granted widely by Harṣa and the rulers of numerous early mediaeval dynasties.

The value of these land grants, which have been published in the volumes of *CII*, *EI*, *Epigraphia Carnatica*, *South Indian Inscriptions*, etc., is undoubtedly greater than that of the literary sources. In spite of the monumental work of P. V. Kane on the Dharmaśāstras, their dates can be fixed only within a margin of one or two centuries. But from Gupta times onwards land grants are generally dated, and if they are not dated they can be palaeographically assigned to a particular period, in which the range of difference would not be as wide as in the date of the legal literature.[1] Again, land grants can be assigned to a particular region, which cannot be done with certainty in regard to legal texts. Further, legal texts, regardless of differences of authors and chronology, repeat the conventional clauses on partition of property and boundary disputes, which makes it difficult to investigate changes in the land

[1]In Orissa, however, the forms of epigraphic writing are bewildering, and it has not been possible to settle the beginning of the eras mentioned in its inscriptions.

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system. All this may not appear as a merit of land grants to students of modern history whose sources are practically fixed in time and place, but this certainly is of some help to those scholars who are interested in specific developments in early Indian economic life and not in describing it under conventional categories.

Nevertheless, as a source land grants suffer from certain weaknesses. Genuine grants have to be distinguished from forged ones. which were occasionally manufactured by clever brāhmaṇas (sometimes described as *lampaṭāḥ*) to acquire and increase their landed property. To give an air of authenticity such grants follow the conventional pattern and produce the correct genealogy of the benefactors, but give wrong information about the name, area, and other details regarding land. Further, the problem of distinguishing the grain from the chaff is not altogether absent in land grants. Most grants follow the model draft, and their terminology does not always reveal the real state of affairs. Thus the grants are made in perpetuity to last as long as the sun and the moon last, but we have cases of revocations and renewals under the Gurjara-Pratīhāras.[1] Similarly some officials and others, notified of grants in the inscriptions of Cambā, seem to be practically those mentioned in Pāla inscriptions in the same order. Some Nepalese grants are also similar to the Pāla grants. We have therefore to explain the nature of contact between the Himalayan states and eastern India; the similarity of drafts may have been derived from a common source. We find common features in the languages of the Himalayan areas and those of Mithila, Bengal, Assam and Orissa, especially in respect of verb formations. Whether it is the list of officials or of dues, when we notice similarities between the grants of distant areas it may be worthwhile to investigate how far the drafts were regional in character and how far they were considered authoritative in their respective areas. The eulogies of the king given in land grants do not throw much light on economic life, but the literal reproduction of the verses of the *Raghuvaṃśa* in a land grant of Assam shows that we should be on guard against such quotations in inscriptions from literature. Since in the beginning grants were made to brāhmaṇas on a wide scale, the usual purpose specified in the grants is religious and spiritual. But it appears incongruous when this object is set forth as the cause of

[1] *EI*, XIX, no. 2, 11. 1-16.

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grants to kāyastha or other non-brāhmaṇa vassals and officials.[1] Thus the declared intentions in grants may mislead us as to their real purpose, results, and implications.

As a source of economic history land grants can be studied in two possible ways. We may ask major questions regarding agrarian expansion, self-sufficient economy, ownership of land, rate of productivity, relation between agriculture and crafts, fragmentation or consolidation of holdings, extent of the use of money economy, etc. Alternatively we may attempt a thorough analysis of the available economic material in the land grants under well-known rubrics. In our opinion the second process should precede and form the basis of the first. A detailed study would involve identification of villages granted and of the fiscal units in which they were situated. The topography of the villages may throw light on the founding of new settlements or on the process of social differentiation in the existing settlements. We might examine the multiple-village fiscal units introduced by the Rajputs. On the basis of the number of villages in some areas either in the days of Akbar or in modern times, it may be possible to obtain a rough idea of the proportion of villages held as grants by the brāhmaṇas. Thus in the Gāhaḍavāla kingdom the chief priest Jāgu Śarmā and his son were granted villages in 18 out of 60 *pattalās* into which the state was divided. Whether the land allotted was cultivated or virgin can also be known from the grants, although they do not describe the ways by which the virgin soil was brought under cultivation.

All grants enumerate the fiscal dues transferred to the donees. But while the meanings assigned to such terms as *udraṅga* and *uparikara* of Gupta times are not free from controversy, the terms *pravaṇikara*,[2] *viṃsatiaṭhuprastha*,[3] *yamalikambali*,[4] *kumaragadiāṇaka*,[5] *barabajhe*[6] of Gāhaḍavāla grants still await explanation; perhaps they may be understood with the aid of the Apabhraṃśa literature of the time. Besides regional differences in dues, we have to take into account the differences between cultivated and backward areas

[1] *EI*, XXIX, no. 26; XVI, no. 20; XX, no. 14c.
[2] ibid., IX, no. 11, Plate 0, l. 22.
[3] ibid., II, no. 29, Plate II, ll. 15-16.
[4] ibid., IV, no. 11, Plate V, l. 29.
[5] ibid., II, no. 29, Plate II, ll. 20-21.
[6] *AI*, XIV, 101-4.

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situated in the same region, and especially in such regions as Orissa and Assam. What is more important, a period-wise critical survey of the dues to be paid by the villages to the state may bring to light the main stages in the development of taxation system. The Gāhaḍavāla grants seem to mention nearly ten taxes, but only a study of the other grants can show whether the burden of taxes increased or decreased, whether oppression was individual or institutionalized, or whether the capacity to pay had increased.

Early mediaeval grants also transfer certain agrarian rights such as those to pastures, irrigation facilities, rivers, trees, hills, etc., to the beneficiaries, but we do not know whether these rights were enjoyed collectively by the villagers under royal aegis or whether they were purely royal privileges made over to the donees. This will lead us on to the ownership of land. So far all discussions on this problem have been mainly theoretical, based on literary texts. Only a careful study of land grants can show how far ownership of land was collective, royal, and individual, how far these rights clashed and overlapped with one another and whether the practice underwent any change. So far as the brāhmaṇas were concerned, the process of individual ownership of land in was carried forward by successive land grants made to them. The basis of their right to land was the royal charter, which transferred to them the enjoyment of usufruct. But since the grant was hereditary and exempt from taxes to the state it amounted to the practical ownership of land. Region-wise charts of the donees prepared in chronological order can give us an idea of the relative numerical and economic strength of the brāhmaṇas (individuals and in groups), *maṭhas*, temples, vassals, and civil and military officials, who were granted land. Cases of sub-infeudation may be compiled in separate charts, which can throw light on the various grades of intermediaries in the land system.

Land grants may be made to yield information on the organization of agricultural production. The transfer of whole villages implies the transfer of peasants who paid a part of their produce, nowhere specified in grants, to intermediaries. But some grants issued by the Candella and Oriya kings specify the transfer of peasants, artisans, traders, etc., to the donees.[1] Such a practice was adopted to compel the artisans and peasants to run the self-sufficient economy of the villages, and reminds us of serfdom. From the sixth century AD on-

[1] *sa-kāru-karṣaka-vaṇig-vāstavyam. EI*, XXXII, no. 14, Plate 1, l.31.

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wards many grants in western and central India empower the grantees not only to enjoy and cultivate the land but also to get it enjoyed and cultivated by others.[1] This would suggest that peasants did not control the source of production in the donated areas. But how wide and strong was the practice of serfdom, sharecropping and temporary peasantship has still to be found out from land grants.

The resources and products peculiar to various regions are mentioned in many grants. The Candella grants show that sugarcane, cotton, and hemp were important cash crops in central India. The Assamese grants refer to several useful trees such as Jāmun, Bel, mango, red-silk-cotton tree, etc.[2] The Candella, the Gāhaḍavāla, and other grants specify salt and iron as the products of the land which is transferred. Moreover, mines and treasures, hidden and above the surface, are mentioned in many grants. Read along with literary sources the epigraphic records of grants can enable us to trace the extension of old products, the introduction of new ones, and the importance of areas depending on its proximity to mines, rivers, etc.

Right from the time of the Sātavāhana grants, which mention *nivartana* as a unit of land measurement, measurements are given in several Gupta and early mediaeval grants. What these measures mean in modern terms, whether they were introduced by the state or were purely local—we have yet to know. Some Bengal and Assam charters mention the measures of the land and the quantity of the produce together with its price. If we can establish their modern equivalents, we may deduce from them not only the relative rate of productivity but also the purchasing power of the people in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Rough estimates of production in various regions can show whether there was a general increase in yield in early mediaeval times. The bigger question whether feudal economy released new forces of production can also be taken up in this connection. This may be linked up with an inquiry into technological developments. Land grants mention *arahaṭṭas* or Persian wheels introduced for irrigation purposes in Rajasthan and Gujarat. Land charters can provide some idea about the expansion of irrigation facilities, which included various methods of raising water from wells and the construction of

[1] *EI*, XXXII, no. 14; Charter I, ll.32-33. This Candella grant also allows the grantee to dispose of the land by sale or gift.

[2] *Kāmarūpaśāsanāvalī*, ed. Dimbeswar Sarma, Gauhati, 1981, p. 70, lines 52-54; p. 77, lines 47-49.

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wells and tanks in western India and other parts of the country. It is significant that the term *vāpī* used frequently in inscriptions is connected with the verb root *vap*, which means to sow. *Vāpī* is translated as a step well, but it may also mean a small tank. Land grants show that a large number of *vāpīs* was constructed in south Rajasthan and north Gujarat in *c.* AD 1000-1300.[1]

Later grants can indicate the extent of the use of coins. Some grants of Orissa kings and Sena rulers give estimates of revenue assessment in terms of money, but we do not know whether collection was made in cash. The land grants of the Pālas mention *śaulkika* and *tarika*, implying thereby that trade had not altogether disappeared. The Paramāra, Caulukya, and Cāhamāna inscriptions refer to income from shops and sale of commodities in terms of *drammas*. The grants of Gujarat and Rajasthan show that in the eleventh and twelfth centuries the areas witnessed the beginnings of those trading activities for which they became famous in subsequent times.

The land grants are also useful for the history and nature of towns in early mediaeval times. They mention many victory camps or temporary capitals called *skandhāvāras*, from which they were issued. The Pāla grants speak of as many as eight *jayaskandhāvāras*, which, unproductive by themselves, could not have been maintained without the productive activities of numerous artisans and peasants. In course of time some of these, like the periodical markets called *haṭṭas* in the grants, may have grown into towns. Grants can help the reconstruction of the economic activities of some towns, such as those of Sīyaḍoṇi *pattana* near Gwalior. A study of the character of the towns mentioned in the land charters of the eleventh and twelfth centuries may enable us to examine the view that urbanization was introduced in India by the Turko-Afghans.

It is evident that land grants are important not only for the history of land system but also for that of crops, crafts, trade, money economy, taxation, towns, irrigations, migration and settlements. In view of the growing interest in the economic history of India it is essential to prepare a systematic list of land charters in regional and chronological

[1]See V.K. Jain, "Trade and Traders in Western India (AD 1000-1300)," Ph.D. thesis submitted to the University of Delhi in 1981. This study contains a map showing the distribution of wells and tanks in western India in AD 1000-1300.

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order. Since numerous inscriptions from Gupta times onwards appear as land grants, in regard to north India the purpose can be served if D.R. Bhandarkar's *List of Brāhmī Inscriptions in Northern India*, now nearly 60 years old, is revised and brought up to date. But we have far more land charters in the south.[1] What we need most for researchers and advanced students is a preparation of the analytical contents of all such charters on statistical lines.

[1]Several volumes of south Indian inscriptions, including many land grants, have been prepared by T.V. Mahalingam, who has provided gists and translations in English, but these volumes are yet to be published by the Indian Council of Historical Research.

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CHAPTER XVI

Problems of Social and Economic Processes in the Early Middle Ages

WHAT was begun on a small scale by C. V. Vaidya on the general history of early medieaval India was accomplished on a large scale in regard to the political history of northern India during the same period by H.C. Ray. But even the two monumental volumes of Ray were considered to be inadequate. By this time practically every dynasty covered by him—the Gurjara-Pratīhāras, the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, the Pālas, the Gāhaḍavālas, the Candellas, the Kalacuris, the Cāhamānas, the Paramāras, and the Caulukyas—has been made the subject of an independent monograph; some of them such as the Gurjara-Pratīhāras and the Candellas have been treated in more than one monograph. Thus so far as political history is concerned, research scholars and their supervisors are frantically in search of new topics. A possibility lay in the political history of mediaeval Orissa, which possesses a larger number of inscriptions than Bengal and Bihar put together, but by now we have several publications on it. Histories of outlying parts such as Assam or Kashmir have either been published or are in the course of publication. It is therefore evident that the possibility of research on the dynastic or political history of different regions in northern India in mediaeval times has been practically exhausted. Though there is plenty of room for improvement in matters of detail in political history, the broad outline has been fixed, and we do not see much hope for any material change in it unless political history is treated as an integral part of the general history of our period.

An important problem in the general history of India is that of transition from the ancient to the mediaeval. Certain dates such as AD 647, 711, 750, 916, 997, and 1206 have been suggested as landmarks in political history. But since politics was the preoccupation of a small section of society in early times, it has to be shown whether any of the above-mentioned dates or whether any other date or point of time is equally significant in the history of land system, crafts and com-

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merce, polity, society, language, art, religion, etc. There has taken place a lot of discussion whether Harşavardhana's death in AD 647 marks the end of one and the beginning of another era in Indian history. The statement of Vincent Smith that the death of Harşavardhana set in the process of decline in Indian history has been ably refuted by a number of scholars, and especially by H.C. Ray. But for those who wish to investigate patterns of social and economic life, the real point to look for is not the presages of decline and prosperity but the nature of change in the existing way of life. If the change is of a fundamental nature, it should be regarded as heralding the advent of a new period. If it is a minor change it would not necessitate any new characterization of the period. Even the question of decline and prosperity has to be examined in relation to the process of change involved in it. We have to carefully consider how far the decline of the existing system of life shows symptoms of the rise of a new pattern of life. None of these points has been taken into account by V. Smith when he says that the death of Harşavardhana in AD 647 begins a period of decline nor by those who try to refute his theory.

On the grounds of dynastic and political history H. C. Ray suggests that AD 916 should be accepted as the line of demarcation between the two periods in the history of northern India. In his opinion: 'these may be called the ancient and the mediaeval periods; but it would be perhaps more reasonable to call them simply the Hindu period and the period of the Turks and Afghans.'[1] A similar approach has been adopted by some other scholars. In the fifth volume of the *History and Culture of the Indian People* it is said at one place that ancient India came to an end in AD 997, and again, at another, that in Indian history the mediaeval factor was introduced in the thirteenth century. Both views are based on the assumption that the Muslim conquest ushered in mediaevalism in India. Does it mean that without the Muslim conquest there would have been no mediaevalism in India? Does it imply that the countries of Europe which escaped this conquest had no mediaeval period in their history? In Europe it is difficult to think of mediaevalism without feudalism, the origins and nature of which have to be examined in the case of India. In our opinion the beginnings of a feudal way of life can be sought in the age of the Guptas and Harşa, which marks a period of transition in the history

[1] *The Dynastic History of Northern India* (Calcutta, 1931, reprinted New Delhi, 1973.), Introduction, p. xxxix.

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of India. The most significant development during the period was the rise of landed intermediaries, who were created by land grants made to brāhmaṇas and given almost sovereign powers in the villages made over to them. Under Harṣa high officials were granted land for their maintenance. There is little epigraphic evidence of land grants made by the Gupta emperors, but their feudatories made this a common practice; and henceforth the number of such grants went on increasing under the successive dynasties. Whether these land grants had anything to do with the decline of commerce, the rise of *kāvya* literature, regional languages, local schools of art, etc., is a subject for inquiry, for we notice new developments in all these various fields. The period also witnessed the advent of the so-called Rajputs. They played an important part in the political history and in certain parts of the country superimposed their clan organization on the existing social structure based on caste. All these questions form part of the problem of change from the ancient to the mediaeval in Indian history, and can be taken up in relation to both north and south India.

In early mediaeval times we notice the rise of some incipient regional nationalities based on local dynastic rule, land grants, script, language, art, festivals, and places of pilgrimage, but how far and in what ways these factors contributed to the rise of regional solidarity and consciousness is a question that awaits answer. Since local languages formed the main basis of regional units, we have to look back and trace the origins of Assamese, Bengali, Oriya, Hindi, Rajasthani, Gujarati, Marathi, etc., many of which appear in their nascent forms in early mediaeval period. Whether these languages were primarily used only by religious reformers, as is generally supposed, or whether they were evolved to meet certain other social needs has still to be determined. In this the historian may have to seek the aid of social linguistics. In the formation of local units the role of the local authorities and land grants cannot be ignored. The local dynasty fostered regional political loyalty to the locality ruler, and land grants created vested interests among the brāhmaṇas, who remained attached to their assigned villages in their respective areas where they nurtured their traditional religion adjusting it to local customs. This meant loss of mobility, leading to the territorial division of the brāhmaṇas into Mālavas, Kānyakubjas, Maithilas, Gauḍas, etc. The brāhmaṇas contributed

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to the development of local cultures, which flowered in the material conditions created by land grants. Although the countrywide conquests of powerful rulers and the services of the mercenaries such as Mālava, Karṇāṭa, Gauḍa soldiers, etc., with rulers outside their own homelands worked as unifying bonds, the regional units were becoming increasingly important. Thanks to the labours of scholars, some of whom are inspired by regional patriotism, the histories of many regions and sub-regions have been written, and they make it possible to survey the factors which led to regional developments. But the emergence of the cultural identity and personality of a region may have to be related to an examination of the formation of the wider self-sufficient geographical and economic units.

A region-wise micro-study of polity and land system could prove rewarding, for mediaeval inscriptions are mostly land grants, which name officials and administrative units, and enumerate fiscal dues and agrarian rights transferred to the beneficiaries. For such a purpose the whole of north India can be divided into: (1) Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, (2) central India and Uttar Pradesh, (3) Rajasthan and Gujarat, and (4) Cambā, Nepal, and other hill states. It is significant that generally land grants are not found in the Punjab and Kashmir. The main source for this study would be epigraphic records of land grants, but the commentaries on early Dharmaśāstras and such works as the *Lekhapaddhati* may help. Old lexicons and Prākṛt texts may throw some light on technical terms for officials and fiscal dues mentioned in inscriptions. They also might indicate the difference between vassals and central officials, and vassals and intermediaries. The methods of collecting taxes, maintaining officials and mobilising soldiers, the role of rituals vis-a-vis political power, and the relative position of the chiefs, landed grantees, central officials, merchant guilds, etc., in the power structure need investigation.

It is difficult to isolate the political organization from the prevailing land system. The study of the agrarian system will mean an analysis of various kinds of land tenure, keeping in view the regional and demographic differences. It will also mean a re-examination of the vexed theory of the ownership of land, which has to be linked with control over the means of production as known from epigraphs. The establishment of fiscal units or fiefs consisting of 12, 16, or 17 villages or their multiples seems to be the Rajput contribution to the mediaeval land system and polity, but whether the practice

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was indigenous or foreign and whether it prevailed on a wide and significant scale is a fit subject for investigation. An important aspect of agrarian history is the problem of productivity. Probably we can get some idea about production if we could work out the relation between measurements and weights given in some land grants. The increasing number of taxes in certain areas may presuppose progress in production, but so far we have no means to measure it. We have to think of techniques of measuring production in pre-capitalist societies.

On the basis of archaeological and numismatic evidence it was postulated that urbanism marked by the use of coins, artisanal production, and trade and commerce, suffered a set-back in Gupta and post-Gupta times. In this period urban centres decayed and disappeared in northern and western India, in the Deccan and also in parts of Soviet Central Asia. Although regional variations[1] existed, that did not make any material difference to the striking phenomenon of urban decline as a whole. In any case the various dimensions of urbanism in Gupta and post-Gupta times have to be studied in depth areawise. Horizontal diggings with this object in view may yield interesting results. Whether urbanism was revived by the Turks or whether its revival had begun in the country earlier from AD 1000 onwards poses another problem. The relation of whatever urbanism the country had to the process of social and economic differentiation has to be investigated; so also the contribution of towns to the overall production.

The position of the peasantry has also attracted the attention of researchers. We think that in early medieval times a good part of the country had a subject peasantry,[2] but others talk of independent landowning cultivators.[3] In this debate the use of the phrase 'control or ownership of the means of production' raises a basic issue which

[1]B.D. Chattopadhyay, "Trade and Urban Centres in Early Medieval North India," *The Indian Historical Review*, I, 1974, 203-19.

[2]B.N.S. Yadava, *Society and Culture in Northern India in the Twelfth Century*, Allahabad, 1973; "Immobility and Subjection of Peasantry in Early Mediaeval Complex," *IHR*, I, 1974, 18-27; Presidential Address, Section I, Indian History Congress, 41st Session, Bombay University, Bombay, 1980. D.N. Jha, Presidential Address, Section I, Indian History Congress, 40th Session, Andhra University, Waltair, 1979. R.S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism*, 2nd edn., Delhi, 1980.

[3]Harbans Mukhia, *Was there Feudalism in Indian History?* Presidential Address, Section II, Indian History Congress, 40th Session, Andhra University, Waltair, 1979.

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needs consideration. Not only the term peasant needs to be defined, but also the grounds which render him subject or independent or affect his position in any other manner have to be clearly stated. Of course literally the term peasant means 'rustic' or 'countryman', but here we use it in the sense of a person who cultivated the land he occupied or possessed. We know that the peasants could be burdened with taxes other than customary by the beneficiary and subjected to forced labour for the construction of roads, castles, etc. Forced labour may not have helped production directly but certainly promoted the interests of its organisers and consumers. The technical position that the peasants occupied the land does not decide the issue. Production depends on many other factors such as the land tenure, the nature of taxes, the use of communal facilities such as access to tanks, trees, pasture grounds, etc. Communal facilities were being consistently taken away from the peasants through grants to the beneficiaries. The grantees could throw out old peasants and introduce substitutes, evidently more docile and paying, according to the terms of the charters. Similarly it is extremely doubtful whether undefined taxes allowed the peasants sufficient freedom to produce what they really required. It is not yet clear whether the peasant produced to satisfy his needs, or that of the landlord or that of the market, although all these needs could not be mutually exclusive in all instances. If we want to appraise the status and nature of the peasantry a further examination of the regionwise relation between the peasant and his land and between the peasant and his landlord is necessary. After all serfdom, labour service, taxes in cash and kind, snatching of communal facilities, and eviction of the old and introduction of the new cultivators, sharecropping, etc., are the various means adopted by the landlords to deprive the peasants of a good portion of their produce. Given the existence of landlords proved by numerous grants, one has to find out whether any of the mechanisms mentioned above is more effective than the other, and for this bookish knowledge alone is not sufficient. The epigraphic and literary evidence will have to be evaluated in the light of some field work.

The Purāṇas, Dharmaśāstras and land grants can also enable us to trace the brahmanization of the aboriginal areas and the impact of the aborigines on mediaeval life. Grants to brāhmaṇas in central India and Orissa suggest that in some ways the acculturation of these areas was as important as the modernization of India under the British. But

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we are still left wondering whether the assimilation of the tribal people into the Hindu way of life had any material and technological basis. Tables can be prepared of the gotras, original homes, numbers, etc., of the brāhmaṇas, and with the aid of modern sample survey methods we can form a rough idea of their ratio to the total population in some kingdoms and their regional distribution.

Those who are interested in the changes that affected the character of kinship in early mediaeval times face an uphill task. Such a great authority as Kane is bewildered by the complexities involved in the study of the *gotra* (the latest ancestor) and *pravara* (sages or the remotest ancestor).[1] As he puts it: "The mass of material on gotra and pravara in the sūtras, the purāṇas and digests is so vast and so full of contradictions that it is almost an impossible task to reduce it to order and coherence."[2] This challenge was thrown up by him forty years ago, but even with the refinement of various tools of anthropological analysis it almost remains unanswered. The rapid proliferation of the gotras in medieval times is fairly obvious. Originally their number was four,[3] then it became eight, which seem to have been known to Pāṇini.[4] The *Śrautasūtra* of Baudhāyana speaks of millions of gotras, and its *pravarādhyāya* (chapter on *pravara*) names 500 gotras and *pravara* sages;[5] apparently this chapter seems to be a late addition. The *Gotrapravaramañjarī* quotes a verse that there are three crores or 30 million[6] of them, which is a gross exaggeration. But this 14th-15th century text mentions nearly 500 gotras.[7] About 200 gotras are named in inscriptions, mostly of early mediaeval times.[8] Although many kṣatriya gotras are mentioned in inscriptions and elsewhere, the gotras mostly concerned the brāhmaṇas. But what purpose was served by their proliferation? Why and how did the gotras and *pravaras* multiply? Are they connected with the brāhmaṇisation of the tribal chiefs and their people? Does their geographical and chronological location shed light on the uneven spread of the Madhyadeśa mode of life in different parts of the country? Were most gotras artificially

[1]P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, II, pt. I, Poona, 1974, 497.
[2]ibid., 483. [3]ibid., 489. [4]ibid., 484.
[5]ibid., 489. [6]ibid.
[7]ibid. The *Gotrapravaramañjarī of* Puruṣottamapaṇḍita is placed earlier than AD 1450. L.S. Joshi, *DK*, III, pt. I, 10.
[8]Chitrarekha Gupta, "Brahmanas in India, A Study based on Inscriptions," Unpublished manuscript, ch. V, Appendix A.

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created—we know of two gotras combined in one—to cover not only brāhmaṇas but also kṣatriyas and vaiśyas? If so what part did they play in the social fission and fusion? These questions may occur to any serious investigator.

Certain kin-based (real or supposed) units such as *jana*, *viś*, *grāma*, *kula*, *jāti*, etc., have been discussed at length although their identification, relative importance and interconnections in terms of tribe, clan, lineage, segment, extended family, etc., have not been settled. Early medieval sources and inscriptions use many such terms as *anvaya*, *ārṣeya*, *gaṇa*, *gotra*, *mūla*, *pakṣa*, *prajā*, *pravara*, *vaṃśa*, etc. Several of these appear in ancient texts, but their meaning alters, indicating variations in kin-based units. The typical example is that of gotra, which means 'cow-stable,' 'herd of cows' or 'assemblage' in the early portions of the *Ṛgveda*,[1] but is later understood as 'a group of people' (connected by blood).[2] The mediaeval saying that those who do not have any gotra can adopt the Kaśyapa gotra[3] is current even now. Therefore the reality and fiction of the gotra need careful investigation; so also its part in giving respectability, helping hierarchy and yet scotching social tensions.

The brāhmaṇical texts of the period are full of denunciations of the kāyasthas, who arose as a secular scribe caste during this period. Here again land grants provide considerable scope for working out their rise and growth as a social class and explaining the rivalry that raged between them and the brāhmaṇas although both formed the wings of the ruling class. The wider problem of social conflict can be studied in relation to the Kaivartta and similar other revolts in mediaeval times. How far these uprisings represent the collective and spontaneous reactions of the tribal peasantry to the ruling class is a line of inquiry that needs to be pursued. Something has been done on the popular aspect of the Kaivartta revolt, but the aid of anthropology and some knowledge of these backward peoples in modern times might improve our understanding of how and why these peasants and fishermen of north Bengal carried a sustained fight against the Pālas.

An important social development from the sixth century onwards can be detected in the proliferation of castes, expansion of untouchability, beginnings of child marriage among the brāhmaṇas and pro-

[1]P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, II, pt. 1, 479.
[2]ibid. [3]ibid., 495

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bably the śūdras, and of the sati system among the kṣatriyas, and strong disapproval of the practice of *niyoga* and widow remarriage among the higher castes which were so fairly common in the past. Whether it was a development for good or bad is a question apart, but there is no doubt that the social structure of India from the sixth century AD onwards was undergoing a significant change, which has yet to be explained.

In many ways the mediaeval period was an age of elaboration and proliferation. This is true not only of castes and gotras but also of *tīrthas* and *vratas*. Although holy and hallowed places find places even in Vedic texts, their number shot up to nearly 4000 *tīrthas* in mediaeval times.[1] In the opinion of Kane the literature on the *tīrthas* is probably far more extensive than on any other single topic of the Dharmaśāstra.[2] In his "very modest calculation" the *Mahābhārata* and the Purāṇas contain at least 40,000 verses on *tīrthas*, sub-*tīrthas* and legends connected with them.[3] The *Vana Parva*, the *Śalya Parva*, the *Brahma Purāṇa*, the *Padma Purāṇa* and the *Varāha Purāṇa* account for a good deal of these.[4]

The study of the *tīrthas* and sub-*tīrthas*, while important from the religious point of view, cannot be divorced from a consideration of the social and economic milieu in early mediaeval times or even later. The inference that ancient towns retained their identity as *tīrthas* when they declined in early mediaeval times[5] has considerable force in it. But it is remarkable that towns and countries are not enumerated systematically in such greater detail in our sources, especially the early mediaeval material, as the *tīrthas* are. Their geographical distribution suggests that a majority of them appeared first in the early mediaeval period, and a good many were set up outside the centre of the brāhmaṇical culture, the Madhyadeśa. Many had tantric origins, and were seats of mother goddesses adopted in the brahmaṇical pantheon from various tribes. The proliferation of the *tīrthas* therefore calls for several types of inquiries: whether the *tīrthas* were connected with the rapid formations of new and incorporative states, widespread practice of land grants and with agrarian expansion accelerated by the introduction of better agriculture techniques in the areas outside Madhya-

[1]This is based on a list of tīrthas given in P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, IV, Poona, 1974, 730-825.

[2]ibid., 581. [3]ibid., 581-82. [4]ibid., 582.

[5]R.N. Nandi, "Client, Ritual and Conflict in Early Brāhmaṇical Order", *The Indian Historical Review*, VI, 103-09.

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deśa; whether they indicated fresh settlements and colonisation at least on the part of the brāhmaṇas; whether they served the cause of social harmony and integration at various levels local, supralocal and national[1] and became centres of the diffusion of the 'Great Tradition';[2] whether they served as centres of distribution, apart from venues of conspicuous consumption by priests, princes, chiefs, officials, merchants, etc; whether they contributed to the spread of craft technology through the pilgrims who generally belonged to relatively well-to-do sections of society; whether they eventually undermined the comparatively closed economy that developed as a result of land grants. All these and many more questions can be asked about the multification and ramifications of the *tīrthas*.

The mediaeval period is also marked by the luxuriant growth of the *vratas* (vows) and *utsavas* (festivities). Frequently mentioned in the *Ṛgveda*, the term *vrata* may indicate tribal customs. Probably those who combined together for providing food through war, hunting, cattle herding or cultivation constituted a *vrāta*. It is because of this that a later Vedic definition of the *vrata* stressed the importance of large food collection and recommended food distribution to everybody including a stranger.[3] But in post-Vedic times *vrata* came to mean generally 'religious vow or undertaking', which was either obligatory or expiatory. From the early Christian centuries onwards the line between the *vrata* and the *prāyaścitta* became so thin that one merged with the other. However the *vratas* were limited in number in pre-Gupta texts. The situation changed radically in Gupta and post-Gupta times. "There is no topic of Dharmaśāstra except probably that of tirthayātrā and of śrāddha on which the Purāṇas are so

[1]It is stated in the *Vāyu Purāṇa* (110.54-55) that a pilgrim performing *śrāddha* at the *tīrthas* should also offer a rice-ball (*piṇḍa*) for his servants, slaves, friends, dependants, pupils, persons who had obliged him, and also for cattle, trees and those with whom he came in contact in other lives. Kane, op. cit., IV, 617. Further, men of all castes, women, and those born of mixed unions, can take bath at the *saṅgama* or the confluence of the Gaṅgā and Yamunā in the month of Māgha; however, "śūdras, women and men of mixed castes should not repeat (recite) any mantra but should bathe silently or with the word 'namaḥ'." ibid.

[2]The tradition goes that the Purāṇas were recited to the people in the holy Naimiṣāraṇya situated round Nimsar on the Gomatī, 45 miles from Lucknow. It is claimed in the *Vana Parva* (84.59-64) that all the *tīrthas* on the earth are centred in the Naimiṣa forest/country. ibid., 783.

[3]P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, V, pt. I, Poona, 1974, 24.

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eloquent as on vṛata."[1] On a modest calculation the Purāṇas contain about twenty-five thousand verses at least on *vratas*.[2] A text called the *Vratakośa* edited by Gopinath Kaviraj names 1622 *vratas*.[3] But P.V. Kane is right in reducing the list to nearly 1000 by weeding out repetitions of the same *vrata*.[4] Based mainly on mediaeval texts, even this number is staggering, if we take into account the fact that the Hindu year consists of only 360 days. The vows may have multiplied because they were thrown open to all. According to Devala (AD 600-900) women and members of all the varṇas were allowed to perform the *vratas* and thus supposed to be released from sins.[5] The Purāṇas and digests prescribed several *vratas* for women alone.[6] Since the śūdras, maidens, married women, widows and even prostitutes could perform the *vratas*, the social base of these religious rituals was much wider than that of the Vedic sacrifices. The *vratas* were performed for attaining worldly objects. Most Vedic sacrifices promised heaven, but most *vratas* were supposed to confer tangible benefits on their performers in this very life.[7] Thus the almost universal right to the *vrata* and its publicised virtues may have added to its number, but this hypothesis has to be tested further. Many *vratas* also owed their origin to the insatiable greed of the priests, whose gainful intervention was indispensable to the completion of numerous religious vows. In most *vratas* the brāhmaṇas are to be fed, although in many of them the blind, the poor and the helpless are also to be fed.[8]

The social and economic dimensions of the new forms and cults of worship and the temple organisation in early mediaeval times need exploration. From the sixth century AD onwards the brāhmaṇical texts take note of a remarkable religious phenomenon called Tantricism. It affected not only Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism, Jainism and Buddhism but also art, literature and astrology. It promoted social harmony and served as an ideological conduit through which the tribals passed into feudal society. But the origins of Tantricism are still shrouded in symbolism and mystery, and its all-round ramifications are yet to be researched.

It appears that in the post-Gupta period under feudal influences and on account of numerous land grants made to the monasteries

[1]P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, V, pt. I, Poona, 1974, 57.
[2]ibid.
[3]ibid., 47. [4]ibid. See Kane's List of Vratas, ibid., 255-462.
[5]ibid., 51. [6]ibid.
[7]ibid., 45. [8]ibid., 39.

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Buddhism degenerated into the worst forms of Tantricism. In order to satisfy their lust of the basest type, the feudal lords tried to cover their nefarious practices with the cloak of religion, and erotic sculptural representations in the temples became common in the early mediaeval period. The hierarchical organization of the Buddhist monasteries followed more or less the model of the social and political structure. They were not exactly on the lines of mediaeval churches in Europe, but all the same, with grants of land free from royal interference in the maintenance of law and order, temples and monasteries grew into later *maṭhas*, which assumed a feudal character. The history of these religious establishments, which performed important social and economic functions, has yet to be written. How far the *maṭhas*, *basadis*, *vihāras*, *agrahāras*, *brahmadeyas*, temples, etc., contained social conflicts and promoted integration, invited rural wrath and political intervention, and undermined central authority could be pertinent posers. All such questions of social and economic importance deserve serious attention, because so far whatever little social and economic history we have generally appears as subsidiary chapters included in monographs on mediaeval dynasties; these chapters rather describe social conditions than examine social tensions and developments. Methods of production and distribution receive slight attention, and their interaction with social processes is hardly examined. Even the mechanisms invented by the dominant classes to foster and maintain social cohesion and harmony are practically ignored.

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